Entrepreneurial mentoring as an informal learning process: the influence of context on mentor professional development.

by

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This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Date ……………………27/05/2023…………………………………………………………

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial mentoring occurs in diverse socio-economic contexts, and its purpose shifts depending on the goals in the dyadic relationship. Mentors need to balance competency, efficiency, and adaptive oriented learning whilst mentoring to effectively support their clients. This thesis explores the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new relationship. The study focuses on how mentors initially respond to a new mentee's context based on the gap between their existing entrepreneurial knowledge and the knowledge required to effectively mentor. It examines how mentors adapt their entrepreneurial knowledge as they bridge contextual knowledge gaps while mentoring. It then considers how learned mentee context shapes the mentor's professional knowledge and mentorship practice.

The findings are based on an interpretivist qualitative research. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews in formal entrepreneurship mentoring programmes in South Africa. The data collection process involved 26 interviews with 14 mentors and 12 mentees. The participating mentors are professionals in business and entrepreneurship, and the mentees are both opportunity and necessity-driven entrepreneurs. The data collected was manually transcribed and coded, it was analysed and interpreted through robust structural frameworks and tables, aligned to the interpretive approach.

The findings reveal that bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal entrepreneurial mentor learning (situated, incidental, self-directed, and integrative learning) in a new mentorship relationship. A sequence of entrepreneurial mentor phases underpins the mentor informal learning experience. Entrepreneurial mentors 1) conduct a mentee capability assessment, 2) complete a proficiency self-assessment, 3) formulate contextual suppositions, 4) advise and co-create solutions with the mentee, 5) reflect on mentee advice internalisation, and 6) integrate advanced tacit knowledge in a new mentorship relationship. Mentors subsequently share the advanced tacit knowledge within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts. A conceptual framework demonstrates the key findings. The findings elaborate mentoring theory, entrepreneurial context, and informal learning literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

BEE – Black economic empowerment

BBBEE – Broad-based black economic empowerment

CSI – Corporate Social Responsibility

COMENSA – Coaches and mentors of South Africa

DSBD – Department of small business development

EaP – Entrepreneurship as practice

ESE – Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

GEM – Global entrepreneurship monitor

GDP – Gross domestic product

ICT – Information and communication technology

MSME – Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises

SAP – Strategy as practice

SEDA – South African Enterprise Agency

SES – Socioeconomic status

SME – Small to medium-sized enterprises

SWOT – strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats

TEA – Total entrepreneurial activity

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

Learning, knowledge and context (Petersen, Pedersen, and Lyles, 2008; Moroz and Hindle, 2012) play a fundamental role for mentors in entrepreneurial mentorship; an activity within a process that involves a proficient entrepreneur (mentor) supporting a less experienced entrepreneur (mentee) with the goal of developing their skills and knowledge (St-Jean, 2012). In comparison to the seminal research on mentoring in organisations initiated by Kram in 1983 and 1985 (Nabi, Walmsley and Akhtar, 2021), focusing on entrepreneurial mentors (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003) and mentorship is likened to watering a neglected part of a garden (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015). Yet it should not be overlooked, supporting enterprises, specifically in formal mentoring programmes, has developed and produced some of the most renowned ventures (Kuratko *et al.*, 2020). This chapter introduces the topic, outlines the research rationale, aim and questions, and includes an overview of the research methodology. The conceptual boundaries are summarised with description clarifications of some key terms used. A brief synopsis of each chapter is outlined to illustrate the scope of the study.

The development of small businesses continues to be critical in the growth of economies (Bosma, Sanders and Stam, 2018; Galindo-Martín, Méndez-Picazo and Castaño-Martínez, 2019; Sergi *et al.*, 2019; Urbano, Aparicio and Audretsch, 2019; Stoica, Roman and Rusu, 2020), employment creation (Arzeni, 1997; Oliveira, 2010; Mahadea, 2012; Decker *et al.*, 2014) and innovation (Schumpeter, 2000; Chatterji, Glaeser and Kerr, 2014; Guerrero and Urbano, 2019; Apostu *et al.*, 2022). Deakins *et al's.*, (1998, p. 156) study on the support for small businesses argues that, statistically, mentor advice is considered "significantly higher than other sources of advice". This assertion establishes the key role of mentors in long and short-term business advice, and legitimises their significance in developing enterprises and their owners (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020a).

Numerous studies have brought a broad continuum of insight into mentoring theory from various perspectives, including and not limited to organisations (Kram, 1983,

1985; Ragins and Scandura, 1999; Riggs, 2000; Allen, 2007; Eby *et al.*, 2010; Hallmon and Tapps, 2019), education (Carroll and Barnes, 2015; Lancaster *et al.*, 2016; Langdon, 2017), and the health sector (Koskinen and Tossavainen, 2003; Jones, 2012; Chong *et al.*, 2020; Ransdell *et al.*, 2021). Influenced by organisational mentoring theory due to entity similarities, although without the "manager-subordinate power-dependence" (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015, p. 276), more attention needs to be paid to the entrepreneurial mentorship perspective, specifically the entrepreneurial mentor's experience (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; St-Jean, 2012, Kennet and Lamas, 2015; and St-Jean *et al.*, 2017), how they learn, the significance of mentee context, and how mentors build professional knowledge through mentoring (Langdon, 2017).

1.2   Research rationale

1.2.1   Academic rationale

Learning has been established as an outcome of the organisational mentoring process, generating insight into a benefit for mentors (Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997; Eby and Lockwood, 2005). Studies have shown that organisational mentors experience personal, professional, and educational development during mentoring (Galbraith and Cohen, 1996). Mentors learn from the reciprocal exchange of information (Mullen, 1994; Young and Perrewé, 2000) and develop their skills (Rekha and Ganesh, 2012; Gandhi and Johnson, 2016). They learn informally from mentoring others (Rekha and Ganesh, 2012), and may not even be aware they are "acquiring professional knowledge from practice" necessary to achieve acumen (Cervero, 1992, p. 91; Hansman, 2016). With no structured reference, informal learning occurs for them from spontaneous situations and through guiding others (Livingstone, 2006). While mentoring, mentors professionally develop "in ways not otherwise possible" (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 253 cited in Wanberg *et al.,* 2003, p. 52).

Because learning is at the heart of the mentoring process, both parties in the dyad should recognise their learning process (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2007). However, few investigations have researched what mentors "learn about themselves and how

they adapt their practice to develop their mentoring expertise" (Langdon, 2017, p. 528). In other words, limited studies have examined the mentors' learning process, content, the source of their learning, and how they adjust their existing knowledge to develop their skills. Knowledge creation, management and transfer research typically focuses on large organisations or individuals within the organisations (Demarest, 1997; Zack, 1999; Yusof and Ahmad, 2012). The absence of insight into "learning and the development of practice" creates a gap in understanding how professionals "think, act in practice, and make changes", while refining their role (Daley 1999, p. 132-133).

The interdependence of skill and knowledge continues to be of interest to researchers. Skill and knowledge learning for mentors begins from what they "already understand, know and have internalised" and influences how they perform. Applying skill is associated with context and influenced by knowledge applicable to a particular situation (Gibb, 1997, p. 15). While mentors are perceived and should be treated as experts, they are also learners (Sanchez, Roegman and Goodwin 2016). Studies and theories of expertise have advanced across two generations. The first generation of studies by Newell, Shaw, and Simon (Holyoak, 1991), further developed by Newell and Simon, describe expert competence in exploratory research. The second generation involves expert understanding of high-level problem-solving applicable to a wide range of industries. A third generation develops our insight into "expertise, experience, learning and knowledge compilation" (p. 136), encourages consideration of the connection between and interdependence of these listed factors (Daley, 1999), and is of interest to this thesis.

As a complex form of support (Kubberoed and Hagen, 2015), entrepreneurial mentoring requires "an overt commitment to understanding context" (Moroz and Hindle, 2012, p. 811) in various forms. Entrepreneurial context has been conceptualised as involving social, temporal, institutional, ownership and governance, and business factors (Welter, 2011; Wright and Stigliani, 2013; Autio *et al.*, 2014; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Pasillas, Brundin and Markowska, 2017; Wadhwani *et al.*, 2020) to be considered by mentors in a new relationship. When Baker and Welter (2018) refer to entrepreneurial context as "decontextualised" (p. 319), they assume there are two factors at play. Firstly, that entrepreneurship occurs predominantly in western contexts and is exclusively driven by growth, profit,

innovation, and technology. Secondly, they refer to "a largely unreflective approach by many researchers" (p. 320) on the role of context.

Context is convoluted and varies, generalisations concerning best practices of the approach rarely apply (Guskey, 2009). Additionally, because mentoring occurs in diverse socio-economic contexts, and its purpose shifts depending on the goals of the relationship, it is "not only the contend of the delivery mode of enterprise support and advice that is important, but also the background, attitude and skills of those who provide advice" (Sullivan, 2000, p. 163). To address knowledge challenges, professionals must decipher problems at an elevated level in comparison to novices (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2007) and display a balance between "efficiency and adaptive-oriented approaches to learning" (Langdon, 2017, p. 531).

Knowledge can enable a significant shift in an individual or institution, increasing their ability to perform various or effective actions (Jafari et al., 2008). However, similar to organisations entering a new foreign market where a gap exists between "knowledge possessed and knowledge needed" to achieve the desired goals (Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, 2008, p. 1097), mentors are aware of their contextual knowledge discrepancies and the need to adapt their existing knowledge to effectively support a new client (Langdon 2017, Daley, 1999). It is also common for mentors to be confronted with a gap in their understanding while mentoring a client. The experience of knowledge dissonance can lead to mentor discomfort and may cause them to question their professionalism and ability to mentor effectively (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005).

Further investigation is required into the extent to which context affects the quality of mentoring delivered by mentors (Allen, 2007). It is therefore vital to establish how knowledge gaps are bridged with existing knowledge (Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, 2008), particularly for mentors, to better understand the entrepreneur's context in their role as advice-givers in a new relationship. Unfortunately, few studies have progressed further than considering the requirements and practice of mentoring from a mentor's viewpoint, and "systematically examining the changes that occur in the mentor as a consequence of this relationship" (Langdon 2017, p. 543). Additionally, Zhang *et al.,* (2019) argue that there is limited research on the drivers of high-quality

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knowledge transfer, particularly in entrepreneurship. It is unclear *how* entrepreneurial mentors engage with new context, how they learn, and develop their skills while mentoring in new relationships. Examining the topic of entrepreneurial role models more carefully would help to develop a framework to understand the learning process for mentors and how they can mentor more effectively (Wyrwich, Sternberg and Stuetzer, 2019).

1.2.2 Relevance of topic to mentorship practice

Like any relationship, mentorship has ups and downs, with storms to be weathered. A lack of connection with the mentee can cause frustration and disappointment for the mentor (Spencer *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is vital for the mentor to set realistic expectations to manage the outcomes of the relationship (Eby *et al.,* 2010). Investigating how context affects the quality of mentoring will provide insight into mentor experiences (Allen, 2007) and create an opportunity to share best practices. Although within organisations, tacit knowledge is typically challenging to capture, store and transfer (Holste and Fields, 2010), for mentors, the practice of mentorship is central for knowledge creation and a conduit for knowledge sharing.

During their careers, and often without formal training, specialists shift their thought process, behaviour, and client engagement (Daley, 1999). An entrepreneurial mentor who provides business advice draws on the knowledge they gain from multiple experiences, each unique and involving different contexts. As a result, sharing tacit knowledge, a "non-codified, disembodied know-how that is acquired via the informal take-up of learned behaviour and procedures" (Howells, 1996, p. 92) is vital to the advisory process and as an outcome of small business advice (Lobacz et al., 2016). It is also essential to understand whether professionals supporting small businesses learn differently or in the same way within the same learning experience (Mole, 2021) as their clients.

Business advice failures continue to cause controversy among researchers. However, there are opposing perceptions that failure is marginal (Mole, 2021). Small business owners have criticised advisors for not providing valuable and practical advice, for

failing to understand their professional world (Devins, 1999; Gibb, 1997, 2000; Mole, 2002; Zinger *et al.,* 1996), and even for failing to maintain the role of the expert (Dyer and Ross, 2007; St-Jean, 2012). When individuals know more about an industry than others, there is a disparity in knowledge. When knowledge disparity is reduced, advice is better received (Han, Han and Brass, 2014). Gibb (1997) affirmed that the learning experience of business advisors varies from the daily interactions of small businesses.

Small business advisors are usually aware that their views will differ from their clients (Dyer and Ross, 2007), but often downplay critical factors such as context (Laukkanen and Tornikoski, 2018). Knowledge sources, the manner of learning, and the timing of the delivery of knowledge make a significant difference to entrepreneurs (Soriano and Castrogiovanni, 2012). Additionally, the exposure to advice for entrepreneurs is related to their performance (Bennett and Robson, 1999). Those who choose to mentor are perceived as high performers who are admired for their knowledge, success (Ragins; Kram, 2007), and failures (Soriano and Castrogiovanni, 2012). However, mentoring expertise includes the confidence and ability to respond to contextual knowledge gaps.

Context is deemed a micro foundation that reveals the entrepreneur's cognitive processes and experience (Wright and Stigliani, 2013). As noted by Allen (2007); Opfer and Pedder (2011); and Langdon (2017), a mentor needs to understand the influence of contextual factors in the mentoring relationship in order to mentor effectively. Given that learning in an entrepreneurial context is experiential and dynamic (Patton and Marlow, 2011), entrepreneurial mentors as experts need to have some insight into the knowledge compilation (Daley, 1999, p. 136) required for them to perform their mentoring role effectively. The higher the emphasis on mentor learning opportunities in a mentorship relationship, the more attractive their role becomes, and the easier it is to convince them to mentor (Poulsen, 2013).

Informal learning, which is typically unstructured (Marsick, Volpe and Watkins, 1999), presents "opportunities to review learning needs" (Marsick, 2001, p. 26). What is fundamental in this study are the "triggers for informal learning, and how they influence learning techniques, processes, and outcomes?" (Botelho et al., 2021, p. 14). While mentors are aware of new mentee context and its significance for them to perform

their role (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005), they are equally aware of their knowledge discrepancies and the need to adapt their existing knowledge to effectively support a new client (Langdon 2017, Daley, 1999). However, mentorship is dynamic, for mentors, it occurs in a multiple-role enactment and mentoring system. Fulfilling numerous functions could lead to ambiguity or even role conflicts, which could influence processes and outcomes (Meeuwissen, Stalmeijer and Govaerts, 2019). Therefore, insight into the influence of "filling knowledge gaps and the utilisation of past knowledge" (Petersen, Pedersen, and Lyles, 2008, p. 1110) on entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new relationship presents a research opportunity.

1.3   Research aim and questions

The aim and research questions outlined in this section encompass the exploration of three research domains fundamental to the entrepreneurial mentor's experience, that is: mentorship, entrepreneurial context, and informal learning, illustrated below in *figure 1*.
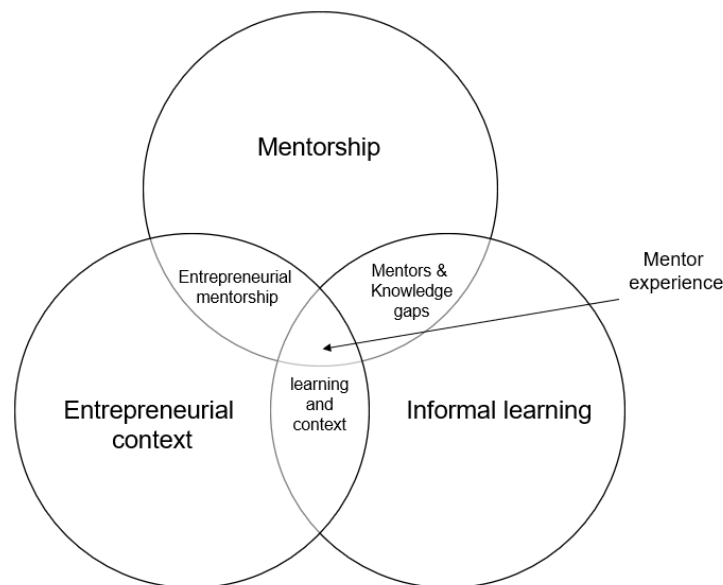
Figure 1: Research aim and questions

1.3.1   Aim

To understand the entrepreneurial mentor's mentoring experience and establish the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in new mentorship relationships.

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1.3.1.1 Research questions

How does bridging contextual knowledge gaps inform the entrepreneurial mentor's informal learning in a new mentorship relationship?

   Sub-questions

i)   How do entrepreneurial mentors respond to new contextual knowledge gaps in a manner that informs their learning in early interactions with mentees?

Lancaster *et al.* (2016) find that there is often a breakdown in the relationship between a mentor and mentee, because the mentor cannot relate to the challenges the mentee faces. They suggest that research needs to be conducted with mentors to explore the significance of emergent themes in the mentor's experience, as entrepreneurial context is deeper than situational factors. More attention must be paid to the subjective experience, rather than just the objective contexts of entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011). To clarify mentor response to new contextual knowledge and identified gaps at the outset, it is fundamental for mentors to determine how they engage with new context.

ii)   How do entrepreneurial mentors learn and adapt their existing entrepreneurial knowledge with new contextual knowledge while mentoring?

For advice-seekers, that is, small business owners, to undertake suggestions from their advisors, the advisors need to demonstrate their expertise (Mole, 2021). Experts demonstrate an "active creation of their knowledge" parallel to constructivist learning processes, where they explicitly gain and assimilate new knowledge (Daley, 1999). Socialising knowledge creation involves converting existing tacit knowledge into new tacit knowledge through practice (Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). The effectiveness and efficiency of knowledge familiarisation will depend on the required results and contextual factors (Cvitanovic *et al.*, 2015). The complexity of mentoring, new context, learning, and modifying existing tacit knowledge is appropriate for understanding the entrepreneurial mentor experience in bridging contextual knowledge gaps.

iii) How does learnt context shape the mentor's professional knowledge and mentorship practice?

An insufficient number of studies have systematically examined the transformative process and professional development of mentors in the dyadic relationship of mentoring (Langdon, 2017). Kolb *et al.* (2014) believe that research on learning has focused on examining knowledge derived in a concentrated period. What is required is a new direction of empirical studies, including integrative learning. Integrative learning includes all relevant areas – experiencing, thinking, and acting. Most professionals do not fully understand the depth of learning in their area of expertise, which makes it fundamental for them to be encouraged to make the knowledge explicit and develop new knowledge (Cervero, 1992). Learning gained in an "unstructured or semi-structured way is a key process within tacit knowledge acquisition and transfer" (Howells, 1996, p. 92).

1.4   Research methodology overview

This qualitative exploratory study gains insight into the entrepreneurial mentor's experience and establishes the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in mentor informal learning in new mentorship relationships. Because this study intends to comprehend and interpret the subjective meaning of mentor experience, the interpretivist approach was most appropriate. Interpretivism as a philosophy is typically linked with qualitative studies, focusing on "new understandings as contributions" (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p. 145). Meanings, in an interpretivist approach, refer to how participants "make sense and reach understanding" of their experiences, their subjective accounts, and how they are aligned and associated. Interpretations are linked with forming suppositions regarding the phenomena, and the focus is on "mental models as the sources of inferences about meaning" (Putnam and Banghart, 2017, pp. 2–3), ideal for learning inquiry.

Primary data was obtained from multiple sources in South African-based urban areas. Participants were purposively selected from formal mentorship programmes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 entrepreneurial mentors, and 12

enterprise owners. The researcher also kept a reflective diary of her interviewee experience. This approach is typically adopted for interpretive exploratory studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2015). Participating mentors and mentees were primarily based in Cape Town and Johannesburg, located in two of the three most commercial provinces in South Africa: Western Cape and Gauteng.

1.4.1 Data analysis

Interpretivist researchers adopt specific forms of data analysis to align with their goals. Data analysis in this study gathered interpretations and meanings of existing tacit knowledge representative of participants (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). An inductive approach to develop a conceptual framework from the data involved manually transcribing the recordings from the conducted semi-structured interviews. They were then organised into phrases using in-vivo codes, categories and themes (Saldaña, 2015). To incorporate inductive rigour within the process and create a methodical system from the data, the researcher borrowed from Gioia *et al.'s* (2013) first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions data structure. Data tables also complemented the data structures (Hampel, Tracey and Weber, 2020). The findings were integrated with existing literature, where the researcher carved out a complete and logical explanation of the phenomenon investigated, leading to credible interpretations and conclusions (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013). A theory elaboration approach was undertaken to demonstrate theoretical advances (Fisher and Aguinis, 2017) and conceptual explanations (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) from the findings.

1.5   Findings

Based on the analysis and findings presented in Chapters 5,6, and 7, bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal mentor learning (situated, incidental, self-directed, and integrative learning) in a new entrepreneurial mentorship relationship. An unanticipated sequence of six entrepreneurial mentor phases - 1) conduct a mentee capability assessment, 2) complete a proficiency self-assessment, 3) formulate contextual suppositions, 4) advise and co-create solutions

with the mentee, 5) reflect on mentee advice internalisation and 6) integrate advanced tacit knowledge was identified. It underpins the mentor informal learning experience. The distinction in the findings is illustrated through a conceptual framework see, Figure 29, Chapter 8.

1.6   Contribution to knowledge

The key contribution to knowledge is found in the six entrepreneurial mentor phases demonstrated through sequence relation elaboration. Additional contributions include the taxonomy of entrepreneurial mentor informal learning, also through sequence relation elaboration, specific relations between mentor affect and a proficiency self-assessment, and recursive relations through mentor assessments linked by perceived dissonance. Theory elaboration, the approach adopted to illustrate contribution to knowledge in this study is a process of "conceptualising and executing empirical research using pre-existing conceptual ideas. It is a basis for developing new theoretical insights by structuring theoretical constructs and relations to account for, and explain empirical observations" (Fischer and Aquinis, 2017, p. 441).

1.7   Implications

Future research needs to consider how practitioners 1) experience the six entrepreneurial mentor phases, and 2) subsequent mentor engagement with the six phases once contextual knowledge gaps are reduced. The transferability of the six phases found in this study to other disciplines, for example, different SME advice-giving forms is an opportunity for further studies. Additionally, the results indicate the scope to further explore the extent of mentor awareness of the taxonomy of mentor informal learning and how that could motivate mentors to engage in mentorship. The interpretivist approach remains the most appropriate for this exploratory study. However, various other philosophical and methodological approaches could also be subsequently applied to gain further understanding of entrepreneurial mentor experiences.

Practical and policy implications of the findings in this study are included.   The discussion is guided by the education and training lens, a key element of the South

African entrepreneurial ecosystem. Implications are directed to stakeholders selected based on the boundaries of this thesis. Sub-indices in the form of the 3As: attributes, abilities, and aspirations, identified as material indicators for entrepreneurial stakeholders in South Africa guide the recommendations. Applicable reports like the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, South Africa (2022) and the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem of South Africa report (2017) were also referenced.

1.8   Limitations

This study is not without limitations. From a methodological perspective, self-reported and cross-sectional data have their restrictions. Interviews in cross-sectional studies capture recollections of past events at a specific given time. Longitudinal studies on the other hand, capture complete reflexivity in action which examines developments as they occur. Using a small number of cases is the nature of a study such as this. Concerns about generalisability in qualitative research involve the limited number of participants. The challenge for qualitative researchers is demonstrating that their findings demonstrate a broader significance to existing theory (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). While this study involved experienced mentors with demographic indicators, there are other opportunities to explore and reflect the experiences of varied demographic delineations to extend the conceptual framework developed to other dimensions.

1.9   Conceptual boundaries

Emphasis on boundaries is significant in qualitative studies, as boundaries provide limits, distance or scope (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2006). Symbolic and social boundaries are a promising approach for interpreting cultural boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorise objects, people, practices, and even time and space". Used as tools, they support groups and individuals in the consensus of definitions of reality. They could give insight into the variances and similarities found in more "interpretive and empirically based academic fields". Assessing them allows researchers to recognise the ever-changing dimensions of social relations (Lamont and Molnár, 2002, p. 168, 186). They are broadly shaped and founded on subjective perspectives with external influences

(Ignatyeva, 2020). Varied opportunities and imbalanced access for diverse individuals shape social boundaries interrelated with symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár, 2002). The terms in this section are several conceptual boundaries found in this thesis.

1.9.1 Entrepreneurial mentors

Entrepreneurial mentors are considered as advisors to entrepreneurs and part of the entrepreneurial support system (Herrington, M., Kew, P., Mwanga, 2017). Individual profiles of entrepreneurial mentors who participated in this research are provided in Chapter 3.

1.9.2 Entrepreneurship

There are multiple definitions of entrepreneurship, but it is helpful to view it in three main dimensions: process, behaviour, and outcome. According to Stokes (2010, p. 7), entrepreneurship is "setting aside time for value creation, accepting the associated risks and benefiting from the result, whether it is monetary, personal satisfaction or independence". Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) note that entrepreneurship pursues opportunity and disregards controlled resources. Entrepreneurship as behaviour is a way of thinking, rationalising, and acting on any given opportunity. It focuses on the result of actions – be it a new venture, product, service, or innovation.

1.9.3 Mentor-mentee

The mentor has more skill and experience than their protégé and transfers that skill through effectively communicating. *Protégé* is derived from the Latin *protegere*, which means to protect. However, most mentoring programmes have adopted the word *mentee* as a neutral term to refer to the assumed primary beneficiary or recipient of mentoring (Chao, 2009). For the purpose of this study, mentorship occurs within a dyad consisting of one mentor and a mentee.

1.9.4 Entrepreneurs

An entrepreneur is the owner/manager of a venture or small to medium-sized enterprise (SME). Entrepreneurs who participated in this study have various backgrounds and levels of education, from minimal to post-graduate. They ranged from entrepreneurs who had devoted time and resources to initiating a business, but had yet to pay employee salaries for longer than three months (i.e. 'nascent entrepreneurs', as described by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020a), to more established growth-potential small business owners. More detailed descriptions of the participating entrepreneurs are provided in Chapter 4.

1.9.5 Contextual knowledge gaps

Knowledge gaps refer to the difference between existing and required knowledge (Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, 2008, p. 1097). Contextual knowledge gaps in this study refer to knowledge gaps situated in mentee context. They relate to, but are not limited to, the personal, temporal, spatial, institutional, socio-cultural, and other situations affecting the enterprise and/or entrepreneur (Welter, 2011).

1.9.6 Small business advice

The field of small business advice is broad, spanning a wide range of individuals and groups, each involving specific exchange processes in a particular context or domain (Bennett and Robson, 2005) with a small business. According to Mole (2021, p. 159), advice differs from the provision of information, in that it infers "some recommendation or suggestion for others", while the provision of information implies no such recommendation.

1.9.7 Formal and informal mentoring

Mentoring occurs formally or informally in diverse contexts. Formal mentoring typically occurs in structured formats where specific goals are established, while informal

mentoring occurs in a more unstructured and natural way (Inzer and Crawford, 2005). Formal and informal mentoring is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.9.8   Ubuntu

A concept or philosophy central to Southern African societies is Ubuntu. "A humanistic ethic which in its articulation was aimed at countering a behaviour considered dehumanising. Ubuntu means humanness – treating other people with kindness, compassion, respect, and care. Ubuntu is well captured in the Zulu adage: Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu – a person is a person because of other people. Hence, failure to act humanely towards other people is thus considered as a lack of humanness or lack of Ubuntu" (Murove, 2012, p. 36).

1.10   Thesis structure

Chapter 2 integrates and assesses existing literature and theories on entrepreneurial mentorship, informal learning, and entrepreneurial context. Chapter 3 is a context chapter that gives an overview of the situational factors in South Africa.   In Chapter 4, consists of the philosophical approaches typically adopted in management, business and entrepreneurship research, and justifications of the approach chosen for this study. It presents the research design, methods, and protocols.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 analyse data based on the research sub-questions and demonstrate the research findings. Chapter 8 discusses the findings and integrates them with relevant theories and literature to develop insights. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by linking the interpretations discussed in the previous chapter to the study's theoretical contribution. It specifies the practical implications, limitations of the research, and suggests avenues for future research.

1.11   Personal relevance

Having been an entrepreneur, I understand the importance of receiving effective, efficient, and timely professional entrepreneurial support to assist with performance. I

also recognise the isolation often experienced by entrepreneurs, and the value of the support of a mentor. I am a certified professional coach with experience in coaching SME owner-managers. During coaching sessions, I noticed the vast difference between coaching and mentoring, with both disciplines offering different value propositions and boundaries. The amount of training, information and structure for coaches appears to supersede the offering to mentors, as confirmed by St-Jean (2012). Entrepreneurial mentors are often overlooked in research, and yet play a significant role in contributing to the success of entrepreneurs, whose success has a broader impact. I became curious about exploring the complex and multi-faceted entrepreneurial mentor's experience during mentorship. I was fascinated by how they navigate new context, learning, process, practice, the relationship with their mentee, and the dynamics that affect them while doing so. The goal of this exploratory study is to gain understanding, discover an unfamiliar topic, produce publishable insight (Swedberg, 2020), and contribute to entrepreneurial mentorship practice.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The premise of this chapter is guided by the research aim; to understand the entrepreneurial mentor's mentoring experience and establish the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new mentorship relationship. It will focus on insight into research concepts not known to be combined, for a novel perspective. That is, the "idiosyncratic nature of mentoring; learning" (Hawkey, 1997, p. 332); and entrepreneurial context (Welter, 2011), from the mentor's perspective (Langdon, 2017). Through evaluating and synthesis, an amalgamation of the narrative (to understand the foundations), and integrative (to consolidate existing literature to address an emerging topic) literature review approach addresses these domains (Torraco, 2016).

Mentoring descriptions vary due to context, attributes, process and outcomes (Hansman, 2016). Simmie and Moles, (2012, p. 109) depict mentoring as a "complex intellectual, social, and emotional construct with the capacity for professional support, learning and professional knowledge within the context in which it is practiced and within broader social norms and values". It is considered as an apt opportunity for knowledge acquisition and skill development for mentors (Rekha and Ganesh, 2012; Zhang, Wang and Galinsky, 2023). The interdependence of skill and knowledge attainment continues to be of interest to researchers. The absence of insight into "learning and the development of practice" creates a gap in understanding how professionals "think, act in practice, and make changes", while refining their role (Daley 1999, pp. 132-133).   Skill and knowledge acquisition for mentors begins from what they "already understand, know and have internalised" and influences how they perform (Gibb, 1997, p. 15).

Mentoring may be considered as a form of informal learning (Eraut, 2007), an "implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured" form of acquiring knowledge. Contrary to formal learning which is intentional, organised, structured and often guided by a formal programme (Ainsworth and Eaton, 2010, p. 10), and associated with education and training (Eraut, 2004, p. 250). Because learning is at the heart of the mentoring

process, both parties in the dyad should recognise their learning process (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2007). Knowledge can enable a significant shift in an individual or institution, increasing their ability to perform various or effective actions (Jafari *et al.,* 2008).

Mentors are aware of their contextual knowledge discrepancies and the need to adapt their existing knowledge to effectively support a new client (Langdon 2017). Similar to organisations entering a new foreign market where a gap exists between "knowledge possessed and knowledge needed" to achieve the desired goals (Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, 2008, p. 1097), it is also common for mentors to be confronted with a knowledge gap in their understanding (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005). Applying skill is associated with context and influenced by knowledge applicable to a particular situation (Gibb, 1997, p. 15).

Entrepreneurial mentoring requires "an overt commitment to understanding context" (Moroz and Hindle, 2012, p. 811). Because entrepreneurial mentoring occurs in diverse socio-economic contexts, and its purpose shifts depending on the goals of the relationship, it is "not only the contend of the delivery mode of enterprise support, and advice that is important, but also the background, attitude and skills of those who provide advice" (Sullivan, 2000, p. 163). Therefore, context plays a central role in our appreciation of the "origins, forms, micro-processes, functioning and diverse outcomes" of entrepreneurial activity (Autio *et al.*, 2014, p. 1099). The richness of the entrepreneurial phenomenon is found in understanding the context (Welter, 2011; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Pasillas, Brundin and Markowska, 2017); appreciating details about the setting and timing (Whetten, 1989), and enables multiple levels of analysis and a broader perspective (Welter, 2011).

Due to the distinctive nature of the research domains, mentorship, informal learning and entrepreneurial context, and the integrated research questions, a thematic structure directed by broad topics and key connective words that encompass streams of related ideas and narratives was deemed ideal for reviewing existing literature in this emerging topic (Torraco, 2016). Textbooks, published texts, and scholarly articles published in various academic journals were sourced from multiple databases that

addressed the selected themes. The design, conduct, analysis and structure were considered in the planning (Snyder, 2019, p. 336) and approached according to *figure 2* below*.*

Mentorship

- Mentoring and mentorship
- Theoretical progression
- Mentoring process
- Mentorship practice
- Formal & informal programmes

Entrepreneurial mentorship

Mentors & Knowledge gaps

Entrepreneurial context

- Entrepreneurs
- Enterprises
- Governance and ownership
- Resource scarcity

learning and context

Informal learning

- Informal learning
- Learning from reflection
- Mentors and knowledge
- gaps
- Knowledge

Figure 2: Literature review structure

2.2 Mentorship

2.2.1   Mentorship and mentoring

In general, when some people reflect on relationships that impact their lives and encourage their boldness to accomplish things they may not otherwise do, they often think of mentoring relationships (Ragins and Kram, 2007). Mentoring, which can involve a complicated relationship between mentor and mentee, has gained increasing attention as a way of influencing human and social capital, particularly for developing a critical development framework (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003). While the increased interest in mentoring research is recent, the concept of mentorship is very old, originating in Greek mythology. Ulysses entrusted his son Telemachus' education to an old and faithful friend while he went to battle. By following the friend's advice,

Telemachus matured and could support his parents (Andrews and Wallis, 1999; Ragins, B; Kram, 2007; St-Jean, 2012; Gisbert, 2017). While intriguing, this tale does not lead us to a contemporary assessment of mentorship (Monaghan and Lunt, 1992).

Noticeably, mentorship and mentoring concepts are often used interchangeably, but have not been sufficiently differentiated and independently addressed (Scandura, 1999; Mullen, 2005; Chen, Watson and Hilton, 2016). Few distinctions are made between the practice (mentorship) and process (mentoring). Mullen and Klimaitis (2021, p. 25) define mentorship as a "professional relationship with personal dimensions". The Cambridge English Dictionary offers a more distinctive definition. It defines *mentorship* as "the activity of giving a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school". On the other hand, *mentoring*, defined by Anderson and Shannon (1988, p. 38) as a multi-disciplinary concept, is an "intentional, nurturing, insightful, supportive, and proactive process which fosters the growth and development of the protégé towards full maturity". There is therefore a distinctive contrast between the practice of mentorship and the mentoring process.

Because mentorship as a discipline involves human behaviour, and human beings are complex, it is a multifaceted relationship, particularly for the mentor in a new relationship. The attempt to reduce the experiences of a human being from complex to simple can create personal tensions, as it could be viewed as minimising their challenges (Kram 1983). Mentorship is a transformative learning relationship. The effect of this intellectual partnership encourages new self-awareness and benefits social development. There are purposive investments in individual hopes, dreams, and learning interests in mentorship. The combination of "contexts, self-reflection and critical dialogue, shared assumptions and ideas" awakens a crucial recognition of the potential of individuals within themselves and in professional environments (Zanchetta *et al.*, 2017, p. 118).

What makes mentoring as a process complicated is that it varies between situations and is interpreted differently for diverse objectives. Therefore, defining the context is fundamental to understanding the stakeholders and their possible requirements (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2007). The process is outlined uniquely for various fields

to suit their requirements – for instance, in nursing (Hagerty, 1986), organisations (Kram, 1983; D'Abate, Eddy and Tannenbaum, 2003; Clutterbuck, 2005), adult growth and development, academic settings (Merriam, 1983; Daloz, 1986), and small business advice (Mole, 2021). Equally participation can vary, Allen *et al.,* (1997) describe mentoring as a dyadic exchange. Multi-mentoring models suggest triads (Nicholson *et al.* 2017), and groups (Kuperminc and Thomason, 2013). Whereas Olivero (2014, p. 1) explains the generic mentoring process from an interdisciplinary perspective as "continuous and dynamic feedback between two individuals to establish a relationship through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information, and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of the other".

To gain insight into mentorship, perspectives on comparable process and practice disciplines are useful. Lekaj and Qirezi (2020) suggest that strategy as practice (SAP) is not merely a plan, but an enactment through process and practice. It concerns how strategy practitioners "act and interact" (p. 55). Additionally, Pettigrew et al. (1999) state that understanding the strategic process requires insight into the dynamic of past experiences, contextual elements, and the impact of the reciprocal effect. Ann Stolz's (2022) study of the creative process in writing music demonstrates that once an individual understands their process, the challenge is to apply their new-found knowledge in practice. Cushion *et al.,* (2006) examine the process of sports coaching in practice and argue that prior to recommendations of practice, the complexities of contextual purpose, distinctiveness and subjectivity of the coaching process should be considered. Process is therefore viewed as a guide and foundational to practice.

Nicolini, (2011) maintains that practice should be the focus of theoretical and empirical analysis, where individuals are considered transferors within the system. It transpires over time and includes reciprocal properties, such as irreversibility, otherwise destroyed by synchronisation. Its sequential structure, that is, its "rhythm, tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning" according to Bourdieu (1990, p. 81). Practice involves strategising and enactment, where ideas are generated and opportunities identified and seized (Whittington, 1996). Individuals apply their understanding and adapt their behaviour and thinking to achieve their knowledge of a subject and goals in practice (Thompson, Verduijn and Gartner, 2020). Claire,

Lefebvre and Ronteau, (2020, p. 281) suggest the combined nature of practice and process. Though practices follow an "unfinalized, open-ended trajectory of becoming", their fundamental characteristic is processual and open-ended, with practitioners using artefacts or structures to support their role. Whereas (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p. 4) delineate the difference between process and practice in organisations in *table 1* below.

Table 1: Process vs Practice

Process	Practice
• The way tasks are organised	• The way tasks are done.
• Routine	• Spontaneous
• Orchestrated	• Improvised
• Assumed and predictable environment	• Responds to a changing, unpredictable environment
• Relies on explicit knowledge.	• Driven by tacit knowledge
• Linear	• Weblike

Source: Brown, Collins and Duguid, (1989, p. 4)

Most importantly for this study, entrepreneurial mentorship is a form of support of a proficient entrepreneur gives to a less experienced entrepreneur to develop the latter (St-Jean, 2012). Entrepreneurial mentoring is the process of pairing an individual with experience in entrepreneurship and/or business with a less experienced individual in a dyadic relationship to provide advice from the perspective of a different mindset to help the less experienced entrepreneur avoid costly oversights (Sullivan, 2000; St-Jean, 2012; St-Jean and Tremblay, 2020). The role of the mentor in the entrepreneurial context is to support the entrepreneur in their attempt to diminish areas of entrepreneurial uncertainty and "increase the legitimacy" of that venture (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015, p. 274). Entrepreneurial mentorship literature appears to use the terms "role" and "function" (St-Jean, 2011) in relation to practice.

2.2.2 Theoretical progression of mentorship studies

An evaluation of development theories of mentorship provides a valuable overview of how the concept has been understood. Levinson's life stage theory (1978) captured the imagination of scholars by viewing the mentor as a transformative figure supporting

an individual from early to mid-life (Kram, 1983; Monaghan and Lunt, 1992). It is a primarily cited developmental theory focusing on individual competence, effectiveness, and the ability to achieve aspirations. The correlation between confronting past accomplishments and accommodating future dreams was also theorised by Jung (1933) and Gould (1972) (Kram, 1983).

Erikson's theory of generativity versus stagnation (elaborated in 1963, 1968 and 1978) posited the benefit of mentoring relationships through the satisfaction of the mid-life individual by enabling others (Kram, 1983). Although the concept of mentoring originates in Greek mythology, most empirical research has been conducted in the past two decades (Chao, 1997). Whilst research on mentors continues, a prevalent shift in focus of examination has emerged from life stage theory and the mentor to mentoring functions, outcomes (Kram, 1985; Chao and Walz, 1992; Scandura, 1992; Chao, 1997), and the mentee. Whether mentoring translates into outcomes for mentors similar to those examined for protégés is unclear from the evidence available (Wanberg *et al.,* 2003).

Galbraith, and Cohen (1996); Jones (2012); Allen *et al.,* 1997; Eby and Lockwood, (2005a) confirm an outcome for both members of the mentoring dyad. They suggest that mentors and mentees can learn a great deal from mentoring and mutually benefit from the relationship. Scholars have illustrated learning in mentorship relationships as a shift in behaviour which can advance skills knowledge and empathy (Ragins, 1997), resulting in dyadic learning (Kram and Hall, 1996; Ragins and Verbos, 2017), cause knowledge transformation (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007), a mode of learning (Smith, 2007), and enabling reciprocal exchange (Mullen, 1994; Mullen and Noe, 1999; Young and Perrewé, 2000). However, a new direction is required from empirical studies, that is, an advancement from examining intense learning to integrated learning which includes experiencing, thinking, reflecting, and acting (Kolb *et al.,* 2014).

Mentor-specific functions within the relationship have been categorised as psycho-social, career-related and role modelling (Kram, 1983, 1985; Chao, 1997; Noé, 1998; Ragins and Scandura, 1999; Allen *et al.*, 2004; Bouquillon, Sosik and Lee, 2005; Allen, 2006; St-Jean, 2012; El Hallam and St-Jean, 2016). St-Jean's (2011, p. 65) extended Kram's (1983) findings with analysis that posits four entrepreneurial mentor functions:

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"reflector, reassurance, motivation, and confidant; four career-related functions – integration, information support, confrontation, and guide; and the role model function". In teaching, three mentor-specific practices have been identified as integral, "planning, observing and debriefing, and analysing student work" (Stanulis *et al.*, 2019, p. 3).

Previous research highlights that mentoring relationships are not merely transactional (Young and Perrewė, 2000), with affect (Lejonberg and Christophersen, 2015), chemistry and empathy (Berk, 2010) particularly key. Focus on the conditions where the mentoring experience is rewarding for mentors is required (Kennett and Lomas, 2015), including exploration of mentoring lived experiences, contexts and frameworks (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021, p. 32). Studies have also demonstrated that much attention has been directed at examining mentoring in classical professions, such as "corporate management, medicine, law, higher education, theology, the government" (Churchill *et al.,* 1987, p. 15). Research on mentoring outcomes, particularly concerning entrepreneurial mentors in South Africa, will inspire more participation and strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Kunaka and Moos, 2021).

Because of the infancy of entrepreneurial mentoring literature, studies including this thesis borrow from organisational mentoring findings to understand, extend knowledge, and gain insight into entrepreneurial mentorship. A non-exhaustive list, selected based on context, compares predominantly organisational and entrepreneurship research between 1983 and 2020, is shown in *Table 2.* It illustrates the infancy of research on entrepreneurial mentoring compared to other forms like the organisational context. Hence, insight into mentorship in the entrepreneurial context will broaden perspectives and existing literature.

AREA	FOCUS	AUTHORS & YEAR	CONTEXT
Four phases of mentoring	Mentee	Kram (1983); Kram (1985b)	Organisational
Functions of mentoring for career development	Mentee	Kram (1985b); Ragins (1999); Dreher and Ash (1990); Whitley, Dougherty and Dreher (1992); Barker, Monks, and Buckley (1999); Burke (1984); Ochberg, Tischler and Schulberg (1986); Scandura (1992); Scandura and Ragins, (1993); Steinberg and Foley (1999); Turban and Dougherty (1994)	Organisational
Relationships among the mentoring phases and outcomes	Mentee	Chao (1997); Johnson, Yust and Fritchie (2001); Collins (1994); Mincemoyer and Thomson (1998); Zey (2020); Cohen (1995a); Fagenson (1989); Galbraith and Cohen (1995a); Kram (1985); Murray (1991); Turban and Dougherty (1994); Zey (1984)	Organisational
Mentor characteristics	Mentor	Allen, Poteet, Russell, and Dobbins, (1997); Aryee, Chay and Chew, (1997); Allen et al. (2000); (1997); Ragins and Cotton (2000)	Organisational
Exchange mentoring relationship	Mentor and mentee	Young (2000); Young and Perrewe (2004)	Organisational
Mentors seeking information from protégés	Mentor	Mullen and Noe (1999)	Organisational
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy in a mentoring exchange	Mentee	St-Jean, Radu-Lefebvre, and Mathieu (2017); Newton et al. (2019); BarNir (2011), Laviolette, Radu-Lefebvre and Brunel (2012); Vanevenhoven and Liguori (2013); Krecar and Coric (2013), Boyd and Vozikis (1994), Barbosa (2007), Zhao, Siebert, and Lumpkin (2010), McGee and Peterson (2019); St-Jean and Tremblay (2020)	Entrepreneurship
Discursive dimension of experiential learning in mentoring dyads	Mentee	Lefebvre and Rediene-Collot (2015), Thomaz and Catalão-Lopes (2019)	Entrepreneurial
The legitimacy of entrepreneurial mentoring	Mentor and Mentee	McKevitt and Marshall (2015)	Entrepreneurial
Mentor learning	Mentor and Mentee	Allen and Eby (2003); Rekha and Ganesh (2012); Langdon (2017)	Organisational Youth, Education

Table 2: Focus of mentoring research between 1983 and 2020

2.2.3 Mentoring process

Because mentoring is "relational and developmental" (Kram 1983, p. 11), it is inclusive of phases and transitions (Wanberg *et al.,* 2006). Kram (1983; 1985) has theorised four distinct organisational mentoring phases and highlights career advancement and psychosocial functions. Firstly, the initiation phase is at the commencement of the relationship; then the cultivation phase occurs when the functions of the relationship are maximised; the separation phase depicts the alteration of the relationship from a structural, organisational and/or psychosocial viewpoint; and finally, the re-definition stage occurs when the relationship takes an entirely new form from how it was initiated or ends. According to Kram, and from an organisational viewpoint, improving the process requires four steps: "defining the objectives and scope of the project, diagnosing the individual and organisational circumstances, implementing educational programs, and evaluating the intervention" (Kram, 1985, p. 40).

Admittedly, other perspectives of the mentoring process have been documented. However, Kram's (1983; 1985) theorised phases have been fundamental in the reference and progression of mentorship research by many scholars (Chao, 1997; Ragins and Kram, 2007; Parker-Katz and Bay, 2008; Chandler, Kram and Yip, 2011; Abbott-Anderson, Gilmore-Bykovskyi and Lyles, 2016; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021; Mullen, Fitzhugh and Hobson, 2022). However, critics like Dominguez and Hager (2013) have highlighted the exclusion of vital phases in Kram's conceptualisation, such as the matching process and the socio-cultural complexities of mentoring relationships. They also argue that completing the mentoring process requires training and on-the-job experience, not mentioned by Kram. Although Hay (1997) refers to Kram's process as an in-depth classical view, they propose a more transformational outlook to mentoring research focusing on the dyadic relationship between equals (the mentor and mentee) and creating developmental alliances.

Wallace (2007, p. 25–28), on the other hand, argues that mentoring involves establishing boundaries, expectations, and answering the "how", "who", "when", and "what" questions. Ragins and Kram (2007) assert a continued struggle with understanding the complexities of this life-altering relationship by researchers. Most importantly, what works is known and understood. However, what remains opaque

and needs clarification are the drivers, setting and underlying experiences within the process. *Figure 3* illustrates a more straightforward mentoring process compared to Kram's (1983) four phases. Alred (1998) offers an alternative mentoring course of action, but again, it does not specify how the mentoring process begins and that all-important pre-mentoring stage where individuals within the dyad evaluate each other. According to Kram (1983), initial evaluations occur when a foundation is formed after specific interpretations about the individuals are established.

Figure 3: Alred's (1998) conception of the mentoring process
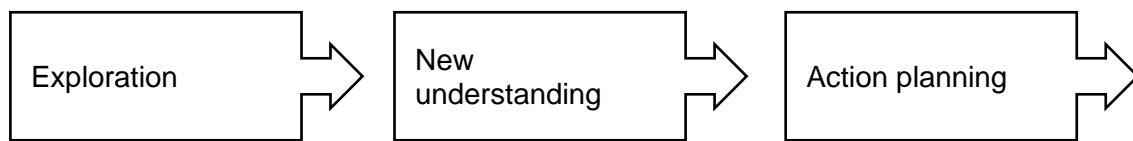
Source: Wallace (2007, p. 23)

The exploration stage in Alred's (1998) process consists of the mentor's thorough examination of the mentee's challenge. The examination also assists the mentee in reflecting on and understanding their challenge in more depth. Individuals may have blind spots they may not be aware of until they speak about their challenges. The second stage - new understanding - requires the mentor to encourage the mentee to view the issue from a different perspective, by broadening their outlook and focusing not only on the challenge, but also on what brought it about. This stage allows for reframing the issue and considering alternative strategies. For transition to materialise, action needs to occur, and the mentor and mentee need to move forward. This stage may include a new behaviour or technique on the mentee's part, allowing the mentee to think of possibilities that take them out of their comfort zone as in any learning cycle. The process is repeated throughout the mentoring relationship (Wallace 2007).

Despite a few critics and based on the mentoring processes reviewed, Kram's (1983,1985) phases have been widely acknowledged. They do depict a comprehensive process of the systematic occurrences of the mentoring relationship. The likes of Sullivan, (2000); Bisk, (2002); St-Jean, (2011); St-Jean, (2012); McKevitt and Marshall, (2015); Memon *et al.,* (2015) have identified the outcomes of Kram's process from an entrepreneurial perspective, predominantly of benefit to the mentee.

Insight into the differences or similarities in process between organisational and entrepreneurial mentoring and into mentor experience in a process such as Kram's would be beneficial in extending mentoring literature.

2.2.4 Mentors and mentorship practice

Ragins and Kram (2007, p. 8) confirm the predominantly narrow research approach to mentorship relationships, and also use the "garden metaphor" of cultivating only one side of the garden (the mentee) and completely neglecting the other (the mentor). They assert that several dimensions contribute to cultivating meaningful mentorship relationships. These include the contextual environment created and the form of learning processes experienced. The mentorship body of work and practical field acknowledges the significance of context and its impact in forming the dyadic relationship, processes, and effects. It is not merely the structure which supports the practice (Ragins, B; Kram, 2007), but a multitude of complexities that form and carry a practice with the intent to benefit and support mentees, and a significant contributor is the mentor.

Kram (1985, p. 40) upholds organisational mentor practice phases as 1) "define the objectives and scope of the project, 2) diagnose the individual and organisational circumstances, 3) implement educational programmes, 4) evaluate the intervention". Seven culturally embedded principles apply to mentorship in practice in the African and Ubuntu context, 1) awareness – constant evaluation of interaction success, 2) time and commitment – a level of respect for the pace and process, 3) respect – a fundamental value, specifically the use of language, 4) explicit and cultural references – recognition of different views, 5) inclusion – means of both parties feeling involved in the practice, 6) care – the "underlying modality that underpins community and interconnection" 7) story – story telling is powerful in the learning process, relationship and exploration (Geber and Keane, 2017). While not worlds apart from the Western perspective, the African view does depict the Ubuntu values of mindfulness of self and others.

Undoubtedly, mentors have been regarded through multiple lenses, as guides (Memon *et al.*, 2015), professionals (Langdon, 2017), "sometimes a novice, and

sometimes an expert" (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005, p. 257), trainers (Mubuuke, *et al.*, 2020), role model (Newman *et al.,* 2019) and advisors (School, 2004; Deakins *et al.,*1998). Developing the practice, that is, the practitioner's skill and capacity, is at the core of mentoring (Connor, 2012). Mentors who are confident in their skill will be more affectively committed to their role (Lejonberg and Christophersen, 2015). A mentor typically has several mentees and will have a simultaneous positive effect on them (Nicholson *et al.,* 2017). However, mentors who have had a bad experience will be sceptical about the process and its benefits (Lejonberg and Christophersen, 2015), which may affect their practice.

For success, mentors require the skill of mentorship because of the significance of the practice (Gandhi and Johnson, 2016). Also noteworthy are the perceived reasons for the willingness to mentor, which include "demographic variables, previous mentoring experience, dispositional variables, situational variables, expected costs and benefits" (Allen, 2007, p. 124). A fundamental reason for mentoring is the affective response of participants, specifically their reaction and satisfaction (Allen 2007) and the classical altruistic motivation (Aryee, Chay and Chew, 1996; Noufou, Rezania and Hossain, 2014; Hu *et al.*, 2016; Crocket, 2020; Tetzlaff *et al.*, 2022). Research conducted by Allen, Poteet and Burroughs (1997, p. 82) found two broad types of mentor behaviour as the reason for engaging in mentoring: "other-focused" and "self-focused". Self-focused behaviour included edification and gratification.

Although the premise of this study is that little empirical attention has been given to the outcomes of mentorship from the mentor's perspective, several studies broaden our understanding. They have demonstrated that learning from the mentoring relationship generates insight for mentors (Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997; Allen and Eby, 2003; Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Rekha and Ganesh, 2012; Langdon, 2017), it transforms their knowledge (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007), develops their competency skills (Gandhi, 2016), advances organisational recognition (Kram, 1985; Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997), and has social health benefits, from giving rather than receiving support (Brown *et al.*, 2003). Moving a step further than the outcomes into the "how" remains an opportunity for studies to understand the systematic progression of mentor experience (Langdon 2017).

Mentees have numerous expectations of their mentors, including the provision of a "safe and protective environment, a fresh perspective, objectivity and distance, influence, and [offer] experience and expertise whilst being analytical, reflective, critical and challenging" (McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, 2003, p.4). For these reasons, mentorship requires mentors with great confidence in their ability, and for them to allocate more effort to the practice to enjoy positive results from the dyad (Riggs, 2000). In organisational leadership, Block and Tietjen-Smith, (2016, p. 312) indicate that the characteristics of highly influential mentors are those who initially undertake the role of "sponsor, then counsellor, coaches, and teachers". These are all roles that require extensive training. Fulfilling multiple expectations, such as those suggested, could be perceived as an enormous ask.

2.2.4.1   Mentor traits and functions

Becoming a mentor is not solely based on professional experience (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). Because not every mentor is effective for their mentee, mentorship research has focused on traits that are predictors of effective mentors. Ideal personality and behavioural traits have been examined, which vary with industry and context (Smith, Howard and Harrington, 2005). Mentors with strong self-efficacy and prior experience were found to be an effective buffer for their mentee's situational stress (Raposa, Rhodes and Herrera, 2016). A non-western view, the African concept of Ubuntu, offers an alternate perspective of the mentor, an individual who practices an indigenous way of relating to other people, where one seeks to work for the good of others and the community as the essence of being human (Geber and Keane, 2017, p. 7). *Table 3* below provides a non-exhaustive list of ideal mentor traits examined in four fields.

Table 3: Mentor traits

Characteristic	Author	Year	Context
Role model, commitment, experience, senior	Gisbert	2017	Medical
Altruistic, understanding, patient, honest	Straus et al	2009	Medical
Trustworthy, non-judgemental, reliable	Leslie et al	2005	Medical
Motivator, responsive, well-respected, knowledgeable	Jackson et al	2003	Medical
Identify potential mentee strengths, mentee goal focused	Gandhi and Johnson	2016	Medical
Well-prepared, emotionally intelligent, reflective	McNair et al	2007	Educational
Dialogue and reflection, professional partnerships	Fairbanks, Freedman, and Kahn	2000	Educational
Support, feedback, encouragement, guidance	Block and Tietjen-Smith	2016	Educational
Internal locus of control, upward striving	Allen, Poteet, Russell, and Dobbins	1997	Organisational
Individual and situational characteristics	Ayree, Chay and Chew	1997	Organisational
Integrity, empathy, respectability, sensitivity	Smith, Howard, and Harrington	2005	Organisational
Self-efficacy, attitude, previous experience with youth, previous mentoring experience	Raposa, Rhodes and Herrera	2016	Youth

Mentees tend to seek out specific functions from identified mentors, which mentors should be mindful of (Laukhuf and Malone, 2015). From a gender perspective, Allen and Eby (2003) argue that female mentors may not have the same confidence to compete with their male counterparts in providing career development in a corporate environment. Conversely, Fowler, Gudmundsson and O'Gorman (2007) posit that career development facilitation and psychosocial functions were more prevalent traits with female mentors. This combination makes them equally able to support mentees and provide the required balance. Role modelling for female mentees appeared to be preferred more than for men. From an entrepreneur's perspective, personal development and business growth were the benefits experienced for female mentees; their transformational leadership skills were affected positively through joint decision-making (Laukhuf and Malone, 2015) regardless of gender.

In organisations, mentees benefit from five mentor career development functions theorised by Kram (1985a): sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenging

assignments, and exposure. Psychosocial functions are posited as acceptance and confirmation, counselling, friendship, and role modelling. The mentor may provide these functions at their discretion or depending on the relationship and context (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). *Table 4* below expands on organisational mentor functions by offering nine functions employed by entrepreneurial mentors (St-Jean, 2012), categorised as psychological, career-related (Kram, 1985) and role modelling (Scandura, 1992; Ragins and Scandura, 1999; Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; Newman *et al.*, 2019). These functions could be applied to various contexts. However, before a mentor is considered a role model, a level of trust needs to be established for mentees to share strategic challenges (St-Jean, 2012; Mole, 2021).

Table 4: Mentor functions

Reflector	The mentor gives the mentee feedback on who he is and his business project. The mentor reflects the image the mentee projects to others, somewhat like a mirror does. This function provides the mentee with a kind of personal progress report where strengths to be bank on and weaknesses to be worked on are identified.
Reassurance	The mentor reassures the mentee during difficult times. He acts as a pressure valve enabling the mentee to evacuate accumulated stress and put problems into perspective.
Motivation	The mentor motivates and encourages the mentee. The mentor helps the mentee build self-confidence and gives him incentives to persevere.
Confidant	With time, the mentee may confide in the mentor just as he would in a friend. The mentoring relationship may also transform into friendship.
Integration	The mentor facilitates the integration of the mentee in the business community by presenting him to business contacts who may be of need in the future.
Information support	The mentor gives the mentee information. He transfers various types of personal knowledge including on business management, laws to be aware of, useful information on the industry, and so on.
Confrontation	The mentor confronts the mentee's ideas to help further his reflection. This confrontation appears in a problem-solving context where the mentee's beliefs, attitudes, or habits prevent him from reaching his goals and makes him part of the problem rather than the solution.
Guide	When problem solving, the mentor helps the mentee improve problem comprehension, widen problem vision and context. When necessary, the mentor also makes suggestions and gives advice towards a solution.
Model	The role model function focuses on the mentor as a person. During meetings, the mentor presents excerpts from his life and the mentee takes what applies to him and learns the lessons that need to be learned according to his particular situation. The mentor may also be a source of inspiration, or at least, of comparison.

Source: St. Jean 2011, cited in St. Jean 2012: 206

2.2.4.2 Challenges for mentors

Mentorship does not come without trade-offs. The mentor's commitment of time and effort are resources that could be spent elsewhere. However, many believe it is worth the cost (School, 2004). What may begin as good intention may not be realised. Most

resistance develops from fear from the mentee of a new experience. Therefore, managing a mentee's fear requires the mentor to be persistent (Olivero, 2014, p. 60). Not all mentorship experiences are rewarding for the mentor. A combination of self-determination and self-reflection is necessary for the experience to be meaningful for them. Nevertheless, when meaning is achieved, mentorship results in heightened self-worth and self-efficacy, both "indicative of competency" (Kennett and Lomas, 2015, p. 37).

Mentorship is also not beneficial for all, but those who gain the most from it are participants who are self-aware, eager to learn and highly ambitious (School, 2004, p. 86). Finding the right mentor can be challenging when expectations based on profiles are not met. This situation is conceptualised as inflated expectations theory, when disappointment sets in upon engagement, which could limit communication channels, inhibiting the relationship and achievement of the desired results. This may occur in mentorship programmes, where matching is less successful than naturally occurring mentorship connections (Chao, Walz, Gardner, 1992). Various other elements influence a mentorship relationships such as location, learning styles, and shared goals and values (Law, 2007, p. 16). Cox (2005) believes that too much effort can be placed into matching mentors to mentees, with programme coordinators in formal programmes over-protecting mentees. It could be conversely argued that in such formal programmes, too little effort is placed in preparing the mentor for the match and experience, specifically concerning contextual ambiguity.

Carroll and Barnes (2015) advocate that mentors should be mindful of their style of initiating conversations, as this could inhibit the openness and flow of conversations and affect mentee development. However, this complex engagement appears to require an interplay between knowing and not knowing. Mentor narratives in the study conducted by Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005, p. 574) portray this complexity in mentorship in the education sector. They experienced a "sense of failure in situations unfamiliar to them", reverting to feeling like novices rather than experts. While experienced in their field. They recognised a deficit in familiar situations to support them in converting the dissonance in knowledge to confidence in successfully supporting their mentees. A vital objective (sub-question 1) of this study is to examine

how mentors respond to what they know and do not know, and how they express that in the mentoring process.

2.2.5 Entrepreneurial mentorship

Entrepreneurial mentorship has been viewed as a valuable form of providing advice and guidance to entrepreneurs (Deakins *et al.,*1998; St- Jean, 2012), in three main dimensions: process, behaviour, and outcome. It is "setting aside time for value creation, accepting the associated risks and benefiting from the result, whether it is monetary, personal satisfaction or independence" (Stokes, 2010, p. 7). The importance of the entrepreneurial mentor to mentees is significantly (statistically) higher than other sources of advice, and demonstrates the importance of the mentor for short-term and general business advice (Deakins *et al.*, 1998, p. 156). Despite this view, there is contradiction in the role of entrepreneurial mentors.

Barrett (2006, p. 615) disagrees with the notion of mentors as advisors, and instead believes that the entrepreneurial mentor's responsibility is "not" to provide business advice in this relationship, but to offer possible solutions to business challenges. Barrett argues that mentors should instead create a space where mentees explore options to solve their own challenges. Offering possible solutions and advice could be perceived as equivalent, depending on the mentee's response to the offer. Entrepreneurial mentors have also been perceived as facilitators for individuals, groups, and ventures, either for acceptance into a faction or as a method of fast-tracking solutions to challenges.

Notwithstanding, having a "hands-off" approach to support is appreciated by mentees to maintain their independence, and timely assistance is particularly valuable at the opportunity enactment stage (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015). The role of the entrepreneurial mentor does not include lecturing the mentee on their previous experiences. Instead, they bring meaning to or offer insight from past experiences. Mentoring entrepreneurs is an opportunity to shift behaviour and attitude, and equally fundamental is the attitude and skill of the advisor. Entrepreneurial mentorship literature lacks research on how learning takes place for sources of support like mentors (Sullivan, 2000). It is clear that the socialising experience of a mentor in a

corporate environment is entirely different from the process undertaken with an entrepreneur (Churchill *et al.*, 1987, Sullivan, 2000). The difference being the complexity of entrepreneurial mentoring support (Kubberoed and Hagen, 2015) which requires "an overt commitment to understanding context" (Moroz and Hindle, 2012, p. 811), and the requirements of the mentee in various forms to effectively offer assistance.

The entrepreneurial mentor's role is also to be a sounding board, to challenge mentee suppositions and encourage different perspectives. This is not to say that entrepreneurs cannot be successful without a mentor. Some entrepreneurs have become successful in starting and scaling their businesses without external influence (Sullivan 2000). The qualities required by Memon *et al.*, (2015) of mentors are identified as having experience, interpersonal competency, trust, attitude, accessibility, up-to-date, information and communication technology (ICT) competent, network, and shared values. Because mentoring is associated with the combination of an individual prepared to transfer their knowledge, skill and expertise with another open to learning (Kent, Dennis and Tanton, 2003), mentoring entrepreneurs with varied contexts is suitable for their development and the transfer of skills (Matlay and Barrett, 2006).

Seeking and giving advice to small businesses is informed by complicated factors, different contexts, capabilities and unique challenges (Mole, 2021). Carbonell *et al.* (2014) describe how domain knowledge, skill, regulation processes and previous experience are vital traits that experts need to deal with in novel situations. Whilst the learning procedure for mentors is unclear, according to Sullivan, (2000), learning for mentees occurs when they experience effective interventions. They grow and develop from exposure to mentors and their expertise, instead of implementing fixed solutions. Entrepreneurial or small business mentorship lowers uncertainty to increase business soundness. What is vital for novice entrepreneurs is lessening the challenges linked to the stage in their enterprise life cycle with a credible mentor (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015). In other words, to be effective, entrepreneurial mentors need to understand the mentee's context, be aware of context-specific knowledge, analyse problems to find timely solutions and ways to add value to the mentee's business experience (practice)

and undertake the stages of mentoring (process). How mentors experience that remains unclear.

Few studies have focused exclusively on the mentor's perspective of the relationship. However, literature on entrepreneurial mentoring suggests that the mentoring experience of both mentors and mentees depends on several factors. These factors include the competence, commitment, and self-efficacy of the mentor; the self-awareness and openness of the entrepreneur; and the challenges of the business environment in which the entrepreneur operates. The cognitive state of the mentor and mentee can either positively or negatively impact the process and the mentee's confidence levels. (Busch, 1985; Wanberg, S., Welsh, T., and Hezlett, 2003; St-Jean, 2012).

2.2.6   Distinguishing between formal and informal mentoring programmes

Mentoring occurs in formal or informal environments, and entrepreneurial mentoring has typically been examined within formal programmes (Bisk, 2002; Sullivan, 2000; McKevitt and Marshall, 2015; St-Jean and Tremblay, 2020). There is a significant difference in the nature and outcomes of both programmes and relationships (Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent, 2004). Formal and informal mentoring take different forms: relationally mixed, technology-based, collaborative, group-focused, peer-to-peer, multi-level and cultural (various cultures with unified objectives) (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). The positive impact of informal mentoring in organisations led to the creation of formal mentoring programmes (Baugh and Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Chao, 2009).

Organisations approach formal mentoring as a way to improve the attractiveness of the place to work (Allen and O'Brien, 2006). It could be positioned to offer advice and sponsorship to individuals who are earmarked for growth and would like to focus on their development (Kram, 1983, 1985). Informal peer mentoring in organisations enriches leadership skills, fosters personal and professional development, and improves a sense of confidence in the mentee (Bynum, 2015). In Pullins and Fine's (2013) study on peer mentoring, exposure for the mentee meant a connection within and outside their respective careers or organisations, providing recognition that outweighed a reward, such as pay for their services, and fostering motivation. They

suggest that mentoring increases cultural capital by developing a mutual understanding of the experience of others.

Informal mentoring encourages "soft knowledge and implicit skills" developed in non-conventional spaces outside the formal environment, allowing individuals in the dyad to link common knowledge (what and how), their networks (who), and sense-making (why) (Austin, 2018). Mentees in informal relationships are secure and confidently receive the attention they are given (Smith, Howard and Harrington, 2005) without the pressure of structure and timing. There is little familiarity with formal programmes, which are most likely what entrepreneurs experience, restricted interaction, and physical proximity. The psychosocial support experienced in informal settings may be more challenging to establish with formal mentoring due to these restrictions (Ragins and Cotton, 1999).

Electronic mentoring, often referred to as e-mentoring, complements in-person mentoring. Using technology offers a key developmental context to the relationship (Ragins, B; Kram, 2007) and could provide more accessibility for the dynamic nature of entrepreneurs. With the increase in technology access, e-mentoring bridges multiple barriers that may come with face-to-face (Ensher and Murphy, 2007) and formal mentoring. However, the "viability, tension, oversight, and effectiveness of e-mentoring programmes", particularly in new mentoring relationships, remain questioned regarding their feasibility and effect compared to the classical forms of mentoring (Chong *et al.*, 2020, p. 30) which include the visual consideration of body language (Rowland, 2012).

Mentoring programmes in entrepreneurial incubators are classified as formal and focus on mentee needs, particularly where the entrepreneurial learning curve can be shortened. Founders of small businesses are testing possibilities and extending boundaries (Patton and Marlow, 2011) with the support of a mentor. These types of formal programmes can be characterised by four dimensions: intensity, visibility, focus and duration (Baugh and Fagenson-Eland, 2007). Ragins and Cotton (1999) refer to intensity, commitment, duration, and structure as contributing to the difference between the two types of programmes – formal and informal. Formal mentoring programmes, according to Jacobi, (1991), are as likely to benefit from a structured

approach, i.e., mentor training, mentor/mentee matching, frequency and location of meetings, with evaluation being a key measure for some formal programmes. Informal relationships, in contrast, could be organic, focus on both the mentor and mentee, and span work and non-work issues (Chao, 2009). While such relationships may work in specific situations and are self-directed and spontaneous, they may lack a robust structure of practice and process.

2.3   Entrepreneurial context

Because the professional skill of mentors is "non-linear, dynamic and context-bound", in a new situation, mentors cannot always draw from their expertise, sometimes leaving them in distress (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005, p. 576). Context plays a central role in our appreciation of the "origins, forms, micro-processes, functioning and diverse outcomes" of entrepreneurial activity (Autio *et al.*, 2014, p. 1099). The richness of the entrepreneurial phenomenon is found in understanding the context (Welter, 2011; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Pasillas, Brundin and Markowska, 2017); appreciating details about the setting and timing (Whetten, 1989) enables multiple levels of analysis and a broader perspective (Welter, 2011). Few studies have focused on the significance of context to mentors, how they build knowledge through context while mentoring (Langdon, 2017), and the learning process for mentors to offer contextually sound support.

The word context is assumed to be tactically known by most and conveyed by listing examples or synonyms like situational or environmental. The term is applied differently in various fields (Shalley and Gilson, 2004). Very little has meaning without context: human beings exist in a specific context, their thought process and actions construct the context, and the boundaries applied from social to legal perspectives are contextual (Despres and Chauvel, 1999). The implication, therefore, is that context involves a situation, with all its complexity. Context can also be interpreted as a "multi-level body of factors in which learning and performance are embedded" and achievable (Tessmer and Richey, 1997, p. 87).

Small business or entrepreneurial support has been studied with a contingency approach to advance our insight into the use of contextual internal and external

support (Mole, Baldock and North, 2013; Mole, North and Baldock, 2017). Contingency theory assumes that "proper alignment among internal and external organisational factors will positively affect organisational performance" (p. 7). Multiple aspects of contingency theory have been applied to understand entrepreneurship (Linton, 2014), enterprise performance, and risk management (Mikes and Kaplan, 2014). The association with contingency theory is that entrepreneurship is action-orientated, and decision-making is influenced by understanding both internal and external environments of an enterprise (Wright and Stigliani, 2013). Researchers like Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and Woodward (1965) have demonstrated that the efficiency of firms is planned and structured, with contingencies taken into account. However, contextual aspects that impact firms also need to be considered. Although multiple researchers have used the theory to gain insight into entrepreneurship, and it has proved its usefulness, clarity in its insight and application is yet to be gained (Linton, 2014).

Silverman (1970) advanced contingency theory by suggesting that, for an organisation to perform, the dynamic relationship between the organisation and its environment, internal and external, should be extended to managerial plans and actions. The dynamic capability as a firm-based and strategic view continues to be perceived as an encouraging approach, intending to recognise "drivers of long-term firm survival and growth" (Baía and Ferreira, 2019, p. 1). All actions carried out by entrepreneurs occur in context, and it is context that regulates the experiences of individuals, entrepreneurial performance, and teams, making it a key component of entrepreneurial innovation (Autio *et al.*, 2014), growth (Wright and Stigliani, 2013), and the scope of mentorship support.

Welter (2011) asserts that context helps us understand the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. The argument is that context is key in grasping when, how, and why entrepreneurship occurs, and who is involved in the practice. Whereas, Gartner (1995) argues that the influence of internal and personal enterprise factors is overestimated, and instead emphasises the value of focusing on external factors to the venture that significantly impact entrepreneurs. Welter (2011) instead examines the impact of broader social and geographic contextual factors that entrepreneurs can view as an asset or liability. The argument is that "context contributes to explaining why some

entrepreneurs might recognise opportunities and others do not" (p. 177) and is the source of differences in entrepreneurial activity across cultures.

Table 5 below shows several dimensions of entrepreneurial context outlined by Welter (2011); Autio *et al.,* (2014); Wright and Stigliani, (2013); Lin *et al.,* (2015) and Pendergast, (2003, p. 3). Four are reviewed in this section, that is, 1) opportunity-orientation referring to entrepreneurs, 2) organisational-business (enterprises), 3) ownership and governance, and 4) resource-scarcity (seeking business advice). These internal contextual dimensions highlight the entrepreneur's demeanour, activities, and the challenges they navigate and share with their mentor in an entrepreneurial mentorship relationship. Chapter 3 addresses external contextual dimensions, i.e., temporal, sociocultural, and institutional factors (Wright and Stigliani 2013; Autio *et al.,* 2014), specific to the South African context, to give circumstantial insight into this study.

Table 5: Dimensions of context

Dimensions of context	Description	Author
Organisational/Business	Industry/market, organisations	Welter (2011); Autio et al. (2014); Wright and Stigliani (2013); Lin, Rogoff, Foo, Liu (2015); Pendergast (2003)
Social	Structure of networks	Welter (2011); Autio et al. (2014); Pasillas et al. (2017); Lin, Rogoff, Foo, Liu (2015)
Temporal/Spatial/Local conditions	Geographical, e.g., country, location, business support, local communities, and regions	Welter (2011); Zahra et al. (2014); Autio et al. (2014); Wright and Stigliani, (2013); Pasillas et al. (2017)
Institutional	Culture and society, political and economic systems	Welter (2011); Autio et al. (2014); Wright and Stigliani (2013); Lin, Rogoff, Foo, Liu (2015)
Ownership and governance	Shareholding and accountability	Autio et al. (2014); Wright and Stigliani (2013)
Entrepreneur's career stage Opportunity-orientation	Entrepreneurial orientation Entrepreneurs	Wright and Stigliani (2013); Pendergast (2003)
Firm life-cycle stage	Capability and resources Resource-scarcity	Wright and Stigliani (2013); Pendergast (2003)

2.3.1 Opportunity-orientation (Entrepreneurs)

To fully understand the challenges presented to mentors in an entrepreneurial mentoring relationship, it's worth gaining insight into the deportment of entrepreneurs (the mentees). While similar outcomes of mentorship are expected by organisational mentees, authors have noted that the outcomes that mentees expect from an entrepreneurial relationship include opportunity recognition (Ozgen and Baron, 2007), increased self-efficacy (St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015; Newman *et al.*, 2019), improved leadership (Kempster and Cope, 2010; Laukhuf and Malone, 2015), improved work satisfaction (St-Jean and Audet, 2012; Shah and Tripsas, 2016), and venture advancement (Sullivan, 2000; Foo and Turner, 2019; Assenova, 2020).

Entrepreneurs are known to be growth-focused or lifestyle-orientated. They have specific characteristics associated with entrepreneurial orientation, including a "sense of innovativeness, a desire for autonomy, a capability of calculated risk-taking, proactive behaviour in seeking to exploit opportunities, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness" in approaching the external environment (Lumpkin and Dess, 2015, pp. 1-2). The entrepreneur's psychological influence on determining the strategic intent of the business plays a vital role. However, entrepreneurial managers confuse "action with accomplishment and motivation with leadership". What is likely to be more successful is the ability of the owner-manager to focus their energy and willpower on achievable goals (Mazzarol, 2009, p. 9), a capability which mentors can expect to foster.

Whether entrepreneurs are born or shaped by their history and experience, including antecedent influences and cultural environment, has been debated. They are perceived as a "species" with the ability to cope during times of opportunity and austerity (Burns, 2013, p. 8). They often have a necessity-driven mindset (Kent et al., 2003); therefore encouraging them to learn, whilst possible (Cope, 2005; Pittaway and Thorpe, 2012; Markowska and Wiklund, 2020), can be challenging (Kent *et al.,* 2003) and requires a solid general and technical background in entrepreneurship and/or business competencies (Brien and Hamburg, 2014). This knowledge is particularly useful in formal entrepreneurial incubators, where most entrepreneurs are socially and

educationally disadvantaged and experience lower growth and profit margins (Assenova, 2020).

Learning from one's career cannot entirely prepare the entrepreneur for the chaos and uncertainty that comes with starting a new venture. Many entrepreneurs avoid any form of management, process, and discipline in their attempt to maneuver through an unpredictable environment. This is not to say that it is impossible to be successful without managerial experience, but far too many ventures fail due to inexperience in an entrepreneurial environment (Ries, 2011, p. 16). Sullivan (2000, p. 172) believes that "effective learning is well-served through a mentoring relationship where clients [small business] are encouraged to engage in reflective learning, and where just-in-time support is available". St. Jean and Mathieu (2015) suggest that mentee confidence is increased for nascent entrepreneurs, particularly by clarifying their sense of direction and management skills, which could positively affect their entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Markowska and Wiklund, 2020).

Following Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, researchers have suggested the idea of entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE). It is "an individual's belief in his or her ability to achieve various entrepreneurial tasks" (Miao et al., 2017; Chen, Greene, and Crick, 1998; De Noble, Jung, and Ehrlich, 1999). Included in Drnovšek, Wincent and Cardon's (2010, p. 329) definition of ESE is the domain of self-efficacy, which is the business start-up or growth - task or outcome goals, the goals that self-efficacy beliefs focus on; and "positive or negative control beliefs", which are the value or strength of the beliefs. ESE is suggested as the most significant single predictor of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour (Newman et al., 2019). Krecar and Coric (2013) describe ESE as a dynamic construct that shifts over a period of time and is impacted by modelled experience.

Self-efficacy theory posits that efficacy beliefs affect human functioning through motivation and cognitive effects, among others. Motivational effects include goal-setting and outcome expectations, whereas cognitive effects involve the "anticipatory success and failure scenarios" created by individuals, including the attainment and use of strategies for dealing with environmental pressures (Bandura, 1997, p. 224). These are typical traits and expectations of entrepreneurs. In their systematic literature

review on ESE, Newman *et al.* (2019) consolidated the key antecedents as "cultural and institutional environment; firm characteristics; education and training; work experience; role models/mentors; and individual differences". Therefore, each entrepreneur has a unique set of required outcomes from the mentoring relationship, and their context and disposition contribute to the perceived complexity of supporting them.

Entrepreneurship as practice (EaP) is an entrepreneur's embodiment of "patterns, understanding, know-how, an aspiration for, and about entrepreneurship" (Claire *et al.,* 2020, p. 284). It is the practice of routine ways that "entrepreneurs move entities, handle objects, treat subjects, describe things, and understand the world" (Gartner *et al.*, 2016, p. 814). EaP broadens our perspective of entrepreneurial agency and inclination, as entrepreneurs "act neither like fully rational economic actors, nor like script determined agents" but have a temporal sense of responsibility to their environment (Claire *et al.,* 2020, p. 284). Similarly, entrepreneurial process describes all cognitive and behavioural stages, from idea conception to operation and/or termination (Davidsson, 2005).

An alternate perspective on entrepreneur activity and focus can be drawn from Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital theory, referenced and foundational in EaP studies (Claire *et al.,* 2020). Bourdieu (2011) posits that "capital: economic, cultural and social, are accumulated forms of labour, which when appropriated on a private basis enable them to appropriate social energy with the capacity to produce profits" (p.15). The theory has been applied in entrepreneurial research to understand how the conversion of the capitals (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) by entrepreneurs supports entrepreneurial sustainability and growth (Nowicka, 2013; Forson *et al.*, 2014; Pret, Shaw and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2016; Hill, 2021). These capitals are fundamentally interconnected concepts that merge the micro and macro experiences and inclinations of entrepreneurs (Claire et al., 2020).

Considering the entrepreneur's disposition and environment, and if mentors are not open to the entrepreneur's contextual ambiguity often associated with a new relationship, they may become risk-averse and have a predisposition towards rigid solutions (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949). Low tolerance of ambiguity causes individuals to

respond prematurely and perceive certain situations as stressful or a threat. They often avoid such situations and have adverse reactions. In contrast, those with higher tolerance of ambiguity are far from discouraged by undefined circumstances and perceive them as challenging and of interest (Whitaker, Thatchenkery and Godwin, 2020). Risk aversion is associated with the absence of unrelatable information (Furnham and Marks, 2013), therefore insight into mentor experience of bridging mentee contextual knowledge gaps will clarify our understanding of mentor response to new context.

2.3.2 Organisational/business (Enterprises)

Organisations are about people who carry out tasks that lead to positive or negative performance results. The organisational environment is typically explored in terms of contextual influences, that is, the culture, practices, experience, knowledge, and skills of those who are part of it. To ensure a firm's performance is sustainable over the long term, there needs to be a balance between social and practical controls (Acur and Bititci, 2004; Bititci, 2015; Annosi, 2017, p. 22). Clegg (2019, p. 5) views organisations as an extension of human agency, tools designed to achieve specific objectives. According to Perrow (1986), the tool "extends the power of the human agent using it". Often, this tool is benign, with benefits intended to advance broader community interests. At other times, the objectives are very specific.

Brumbach (1988) states that there are two organisational focal points of performance – behavioural performance and result-orientated performance. Organisations need to be able to maintain themselves, just as the body needs to provide for its organs to achieve homeostasis. This maintenance is necessary for effective operations, growth, and repair. To maintain the health of an organisation, there needs to be monitoring, measurement and feedback of information on how the organisation interacts with its environment (Baguley 1994, p. 9).

Conversely, Torrès and Julien (2005) liken enterprises to "black swans" because they do not adhere to the conventional management paradigms that apply to large organisations. The idea of a black swan challenges the notion that all swans are white. The black swan continues to be a swan, but encountering it requires a redefined

approach to swans in general (Mazzarol, 2009, p. 6). In other words, the complexity of a small firm requires a degree of customisation in approach and support, rather than a more classical approach applicable to their larger counterparts.

All enterprises follow a series of phases, from "idea inception, design, construction, operation, maintenance, refurbishment, to disposal". This lifecycle is not only applicable to the enterprise, but also to products and/or services offered (Williams *et al.*, 1999, p. 169), the environment and industry (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001), the governance framework (Colombelli, Paolucci and Ughetto, 2019), and the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Cantner *et al.*, 2021). Different stages present obstacles that require unique interventions, skill, prioritisation, and structural adjustments. Steering an enterprise through its development process is a challenge (Hanks *et al.*, 1994) as the interconnectedness of the stages is related to context, strategy and structure (Hanks, 1990). Memon et al. 2015 visually depict the complexity of the entrepreneurial life cycle, they combine Morris and Kuratko (2002); Sullivan (2000), and Timmons and Sapienza's (1992) interpretations. The compiled structure in *figure 4* below represents varied decision-making processes depending on the industry and includes strategic considerations. While the enterprise lifecycle has been well-documented, the test with supporting enterprises is to consider the owner's objectives, as some desire goals other than growth.

			Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Phase 1 Conception	Phase 2 Survival	Phase 3 Stabilization	Growth orientation	Rapid growth	Resource maturity

Phases of Management (Sullivan, 2000)
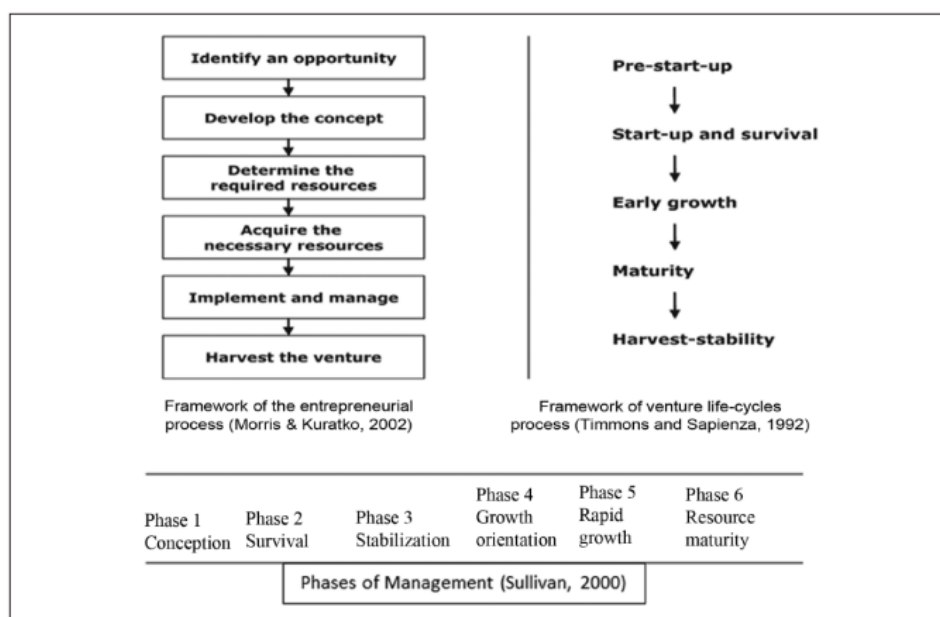
Figure 4: Entrepreneurial lifecycles: Source: Memon *et al.,* (2015, p. 7)

The key challenge for enterprises is to be flexible and have adaptive business practices based on context and operational efficiency (Kurochkina *et al.*, 2019). Daily obligations are spontaneous and resolved through discussion and teamwork. The enterprise's primary source of competitive advantage is thinking holistically and considering how its decisions will affect its progress. However, when teamwork fails, it can affect the quality of decision-making. This could lead to owner-managers becoming more bureaucratic, resulting in demoralised employees (André, 2008, p. 414).

Power in an entrepreneurial organisation usually lies with the owner-manager or chief executive. They drive the organisation using their personality and through direct involvement. Decision-making is prompt and flexible in an enterprise, with a centralised power system allowing for quick responses. Two of the fundamental roles of the chief executive are to innovate and decide the approach to risk and turbulence (Mintzberg, 1995, p. 364). An enterprise and the risk of failure are inseparable. Managing an enterprise involves making calculated or thoughtless gambles. Proficiency lies in strengthening the new venture with sound management (Tom, 1991, p. 93) and sustainable development, such as through the support of mentors (Brien and Hamburg, 2014).

2.3.3 Ownership and governance

The high failure rate of enterprises is often due to a lack of good leadership and governance. A lack of owner-manager leadership qualities and competencies has led to incompetent individuals being placed in the governance structures of a firm. While it is believed that one benefit of robust governance and leadership is building confidence with financial institutions and stakeholders, a further challenge lies with owner-managers lacking sufficient experience in recruiting the right individuals to support them with governance (Lekhanya, 2015). A fundamental challenge is that enterprise owners have not received the necessary training on the benefits and importance of governance (Hove-Sibanda, Sibanda and Pooe, 2017).

It is possible for enterprises to survive and even flourish exclusively on the energy, vision, and knowledge of an effective self-governing founder. This individual may find

it easy to hold others accountable, and yet a challenge to have a structured method to ensure the firm is accountable to stakeholders (Aronoff and Ward, 1994; Wiggins, 1995). Small businesses with the founder as the CEO have elevated levels of entrepreneurial orientation. That is, such firms are risk tolerant in their innovation and decision-making and have long-term investment probabilities. However, condensed ownership by the CEO and founder makes firms risk-averse when it comes to strategic change (Deb and Wiklund, 2017). Wiggins (1995) argues that because enterprise success or failure depends on the tasks undertaken by the entrepreneur, the entrepreneur's compensation is often linked to their shareholding.

The ownership structure of an enterprise fundamentally affects innovation and decision-making, and a significant concentration of ownership negatively affects product innovation. The principal shareholders are often private equity funders rather than financial institutions like banks. Firms owned predominantly by financial institutions are less likely to innovate than those owned by an individual or family (Minetti, Murro and Paiella, 2015). Founder-led and non-founder-led firms experience varied agency contexts, that is, situations between the owner and management, particularly regarding opportunities. To maximise low agency costs, founder-led small firms are positioned to use both their staff and board for strategic purposes, making critical resources more accessible and eliminating the risk of incurring further costs (Randøy and Goel, 2003).

Agency theory, which is helpful in understanding ownership and governance, has been described by Band (1992) as involving an agreement between the principal(s) and the agent. The agent's mandate is to deliver services on behalf of the principal with delegated decision-making as part of the agent's responsibilities. Agency theory is predominantly concerned with separating firm ownership and control between the agent and principal. Agency costs involving equity are incurred when there is a decline in shareholder value in the pursuit of shareholder interests (Band, 1992). If both parties seek to maximise resources, there is good reason to believe that the agent will not always act in the principal's best interest (Jensen and Meckling, 2019).

Entrepreneurs mostly have an aversion to structured ownership and governance. This aversion can be mitigated with governance mechanisms like the board, executive

directors, and management teams to encourage strategic progression. It has been found that the motivation to strategically progress is affected by a firm's governance (Brunninge, Nordqvist and Wiklund, 2007). Corporate governance "resolves issues with collective efforts for varied stakeholders and involves their matters of conflict". It is involved with policies and processes that support the reduction of agency challenges by separating owners and managers" (Hakimah *et al.*, 2019).

Groundbreaking ways to access new markets are vital, particularly in the competitive climate in which small enterprises operate, and corporate governance can play a key role in accessing markets and improving business operations. However, small enterprises remain challenged in integrating governance disciplines. Not only are they excluded from the investment benefits of corporate governance compared to their large counterparts, but their lack of appropriate reporting leads to their suspension and liquidation due to lack of investor visibility of their activities. For small businesses that are mainly family businesses, including external non-executive board members who are aware of the need for effective governance could assist with business expansion in the long term (Sarah, 2017).

2.3.4 Resource scarcity – seeking business advice

Examining entrepreneurial resources enables a better understanding of the drivers of entrepreneurs seeking advice and the impact of the situational factors that their clients experience. Wernerfelt (1984, p. 2) argues that assessing diverse firms based on their resources generates instant insight and a new perspective; barriers encountered by the organisation are more explicit; it informs organisations from a strategic perspective whether to utilise existing resources or develop new ones. These principles for advisers support an understanding that allows robustness and insight into an intangible practice (Burvill, Jones-Evans and Rowlands, 2018), like mentorship as a timely resource.

Multiple factors including entrepreneurial orientation, industry activity, firm size and owner-manager characteristics contribute to small business owners seeking support (Mole, North and Baldock, 2017). A strong link exists between enterprise owners experiencing a crisis that may jeopardise the future of their venture and seeking of

advice. Adversity and identifying knowledge gaps have also been found to drive them to seek advice (Mole, 2021; Jibril, Wishart and Roper, 2022). Other key factors for seeking advice are the need for emotional and social support, motivational influence, resilience, efficacy, and the business owner's previous positive advisor experience. Business owners with multiple advisors are found to appreciate a variety of sources of support, allowing them to choose the advisor with whom they have the strongest bond (Kuhn, Galloway and Collins-Williams, 2017).

In-built strategic inertia is a condition that small businesses are believed to suffer from. Because of the day-to-day pressures, owner-managers and their management teams are drawn away from strategic planning and improving their knowledge and skill. The implication is that the company underperforms and becomes uncompetitive, hence the need for specialist support (Bryson and Daniels, 1998). Any trace of inertia stems from the challenge for small business owners of changing key advisors like accountants due to the complexity of their relationship and the lack of knowledge to assess the quality of services offered by the subsequent advisor (Gooderham *et al.* 2004). Focus on day-to-day operations was observed to impair the diagnosis made of a business problem made in the absence of a business advisor (Łobacz, 2020).

Laukkanen and Tornikoski (2018) argue that small business advisors are "creators, adopters, and users of knowledge as social actors" (p. 502) with concurrent belief systems. They suggest that while advisors act in the client's best interest, the complexity of divulged information weakens their mental models, leading to contrary suppositions. However, openness to resolving challenges experienced by both parties leads to greater understanding. Advisors are initially more accommodative and optimistic about the relationship's success, but problems evolve as the relationship matures and attitudes change. The varied learning styles and context challenges between advisors and their clients can be volatile and differ depending on the relationship stage (Dyer and Ross, 2007) and the advice required. This confirms that the advisory relationship can be complex as both parties strive to work congruently in an often-uncertain contextual environment.

Acquiring advisor knowledge is viewed as only one possible option for entrepreneurs. Only after certain experiences and some progression in the venture's lifecycle is it

attractive for them to seek outside knowledge. Seizing the opportunity heavily depends on the owner-manager, particularly how they deal with change and whether they view a challenge as an opportunity to solve their problems (Głodek and Łobacz, 2021). The know-why and know-what of knowledge are explicit and scientific and can be learnt, whereas know-who and know-how are both types of tacit knowledge (knowledge gained through informal learning) and are more challenging to replicate or categorise but are available through mentorship. Regardless of the owner-manager's needs, unless advisors are "well trained, capable and experienced" (p, 233.), they can find it challenging to direct their clients towards effective and pertinent knowledge (Chrisman and McMullan, 2004).

2.4 Influence of context on learning

Given that learning in an entrepreneurial context is experiential and dynamic (Patton and Marlow, 2011), entrepreneurial mentors often referred to as experts (St Jean and Audet 2012; Deepali *et al.,* 2016) need to have some insight into the knowledge compilation (Daley, 1999, p. 136) required for them to perform their mentoring role effectively. Context from an entrepreneurial perspective, is deemed a micro foundation that reveals the entrepreneur's cognitive processes and experience (Wright and Stigliani 2013). As noted by Allen (2007); Opfer and Pedder (2011); and Langdon (2017), a mentor needs to understand the influence of contextual factors in the mentoring relationship in order to mentor effectively. This section examines the influence of context on learning and varied possibilities of learning approaches that could be experienced by mentors within the mentorship relationship.

As a concept, learning has its roots in Skinner (1954) and associates' definition. They argue that when an individual learns, they are responding to a particular stimulus from the environment, context or situation, and this response is behavioural. There is a process of reflection and reconstructing that occurs. This view differs to that of Piaget, who argues that the learner is an active agent who pieces together evidence from previous knowledge and experience to make increasing sense of the world and take wise actions. In essence, there is a transfer of skill from one person or experience to another where the learner accumulates "in-tact" skill (Hargreaves, 2010). For this

reason, context is an influential and powerful force in all learning (Tessmer and Richey, 1997).

Analysis of adult learning and the assessment of the validity of the principles are dependent on the context (Holton, Swanson and Naquin, 2001, p. 120). Building on prior knowledge, learning in context, and elaborating knowledge are integral to their learning (Schmidt *et al.,* 1987). Situated learning is rooted in context, activity, and culture, and has been characterised as "legitimate peripheral participation" according to cognitive anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) and Brown *et al.,* (1989). This is where individual learning intention is engaged and meaningful within a sociocultural practice. That is, as the individual "moves from the contextual periphery to the centre, he or she becomes more active and engaged within the culture and eventually assumes the role of an expert". Learning when linked to context, is not absorbed in the abstract, but related to prior knowledge, beliefs, biases and fears (Hein, 1991).

Context has an inhibiting effect, where there is a lack of information. However, it can also be viewed as enabling learning, inspiration and performance (Tessmer and Richey, 1997). Contrary to traditional mentoring suppositions that learning flows from those with greater knowledge and positional power, contextual knowledge acquisition for mentors cascades upwards from mentees through mentoring experiences (Zhang, Wang and Galinsky, 2023). Mentors may not even be aware they are "acquiring professional knowledge from practice" necessary to achieve acumen (Cervero, 1992, p. 91; Hansman, 2016).

Mentoring dyads offer a unique interpersonal exchange and learning opportunity. The scope of interactive communication in a dyad is "efficient (high in symbolic content), coordinated (characterised by synchronous interaction), and accurate (the symbolic meaning is shared and appropriately interpreted)" (Barry and Crant, 2000, p. 651). The social exchange is critical as it cultivates a proactive approach to foreseeing challenges and opportunities. The dyad then becomes an additional knowledge source within a specific context (Young and Perrewé, 2000). Multiple social environments engaged in by individuals contribute to knowledge construction and refinement (Billett, 2004). Social learning, related to the mentorship relationship,

therefore, occurs through the context of observing others and explicit experiences; this is when new patterns are created. Individual cognitive skills benefit more from social experience, and unassuming actions can be changed to some length through reinforcement with little awareness of the relationship between actions and outcomes (Bandura and Walters, 1977). Learners construct knowledge for themselves, "each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning as he or she learns" (Hein, 1991, p. 1).

Because learning is experienced through dialogue, involvement, and collectively developing solutions, experts refer to their learning as similar to a constructivist learning process, creating a deeper understanding of a situation. This kind of learning lends itself to open-mindedness and actively pursuing a deeper understanding (Daley, 1999). Learning facts, concepts and procedures are meaningless outside of their context and the task at hand (Gagné and Merrill, 1990). Additionally, context greatly influences informal learning "practices and choices, including triggers for learning, resources, and environmental influences. Relationships like mentoring, are fundamental to building informal learning ecosystems (Marsick, 2009, p. 273).

2.5   Informal learning

Eraut (2004, 2007) discussed learning as occurring on a continuum, with formal learning on one end of the scale and informal learning on the other. Formal learning is institutional and prescriptive. It "may lead to certificates, diplomas, or other credentials for learners" (Hansman 2016, p. 32). "99% of adult learning does not result in a formal qualification, and 20% - 60%" of adult primary motivation for obtaining a formal education is to receive a qualification. There is more recognition of formal than informal learning and their definitions are equally outlined by researchers (Hager, 2006, p. 2-3; Werquin, 2010, p. 20–22). Informal learning occurs separately from the curricula offered by formal and non-formal educational institutions and programs, hence the reference to "learning" and not "education" (Schugurensky, 2000, p. 2).

On the other side of the continuum lies informal learning which does not result in a certificate or diploma, although in some instances, proof of attendance is available.

The role of the educator in informal learning is less significant and the learner's engagement is variable depending on the situation (Nygren *et al.*, 2019). The definitions of the two forms of learning are therefore predominantly derived from "institutional and intentional considerations". An assessment of both types of learning could be referenced through three distinctions "(a) the setting for learning, (b) intentions and planning to facilitate learning, and (c) formal recognition (Souto-Otero, 2021, p. 366). In informal learning however, diverse participants bring numerous perspectives and resources to the learning context (Boekaerts, 1999).

Mentors learn informally from mentoring others (Rekha and Ganesh, 2012), and may not even be aware they are "acquiring professional knowledge from practice" necessary to achieve acumen (Cervero, 1992, p. 91; Hansman, 2016). People's knowledge, skills and competencies are sometimes invisible or unrecognised when acquired in informal or unconventional ways (Hansen 2016). Learning has been established as an outcome of the organisational mentoring process, generating insight into a benefit for mentors (Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997; Eby and Lockwood, 2005). Studies have shown that organisational mentors experience personal, professional, and educational development during mentoring (Galbraith and Cohen, 1996), outcomes derived from informal learning.

With no structured reference, informal learning occurs for mentors from spontaneous situations and through guiding others (Livingstone, 2006). As mentorship is viewed as an intricate yet informal system of learning (Kram 1983), mentors learn from the reciprocal exchange of information (Mullen, 1994; Young and Perrewé, 2000), and proceed to develop their skills (Rekha and Ganesh, 2012; Gandhi and Johnson, 2016). Learning occurs in informal situations "anywhere that an adult is in need of being taught, sponsored, guided, counselled, and befriended by someone who is more experienced" (English, 2000, p. 31).

Informal learning, according to Marsick and Volpe (1999, p. 5), is "integrated with daily routines; triggered by an internal or external jolt, not highly conscious, haphazard, and influenced by chance. It is an inductive process of reflection and action and linked to learning from others". This learning extends beyond one's career and the provision of technical processes; it is learning that assists in building collaborative assessments,

reflective and integrative capabilities. No authority sets out the curriculum and outcomes of adult informal learning, the recourse for learners is self-recognition, therefore less focus on learning process and more on specific competencies gained needs to be the focus of research (Livingstone, 2006).The challenge is that the scope for informal learning outcomes is not straightforwardly acknowledged (Hager, 2006, p. 2-3; Werquin, 2010, p. 20–22). Due to a lack of consensus on the characterisation of informal learning (Souto-Otero, 2021), several definitions have been collated in *Table 6* below.

Table 6: Definitions of informal learning

Author	Definition
Marsick and Watkins (1990, p 12)	A category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but is not typically classroom-based or highly structured. Control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Informal learning can be deliberately encouraged by an organisation or can take place despite an environment not being highly conducive to learning.
Marsick and Volpe (1999, p. 5)	Integrated with daily routines; triggered by an internal or external jolt, not highly conscious, haphazard, and influenced by chance; inductive process of reflection and action; and linked to the learning of others.
Cedefop (2008), cited in Werquin (2010)	Embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support). It is intentional from the learner's point of view.
Hager (2006, p. 2)	Informal learning covers all other situations in which people learn, including those occasions when while living they learn without intending to learn. It also includes those situations within formal educational institutions when some things are learnt which are not directly intended by those employed by the institution.
Houle (1980)	The process by which people gain knowledge, sensitivity, or mastery of skills through experience or study.
Craido, Herranz and Villodre (2019, p. 3)	A series of educational practices that are based on exploratory, independent, social, spontaneous, and self-controlled processes by learners usually without compulsory assessment and do not lead to certification.

Andragogy, proposed by Malcolm Knowles in 1950, 1968a is a form of informal learning (Conlon, 2004) also known as an adult learning perspective, it considers performance advancement for individuals (Holton, Swanson, and Naquin, 2001). Its characteristics are found to align with the learning that occurs in mentoring (Chinnasamy, 2013). Whilst there is debate on what andragogy is, a series of

guidelines (Merriam, 2001), philosophy (Pratt, 1993) or assumptions (Blondy, 2007), it does focus on the adult learner. Six core principles apply to andragogy and could be considered when analysing mentor learning, 1) "adults need to know why they need to learn something before they learn it, 2) the self-concept of adults is heavily dependent upon a move towards self-direction, 3) prior experience of the learner provides a rich resource for learning, 4) adults typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with a life situation or perform a task, 5) adults' orientation to learning is life-centred, and they see education as a process of increased competency levels to achieve their full potential, and 6) the motivation for adult learners is internal rather than external" (Holton, Swanson, and Naquin, 2001, p. 120).

Livingstone, (2006, p. 204) argues that informal learning occurs for mentors when they "take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to an intentionally recognised body of knowledge in more incidental and spontaneous learning situations". However, distinctions have been drawn between experienced-based learning, where learners illustrate their capability of being "self-organising, proactive, self-regulating and self-reflecting" (Bandura, 2006, p. 3; Coulson and Harvey, 2013); informal and incidental learning (Watkins and Marsick, 1992; Callahan, 1999; Marsick, 2001), which is the "by-product of task accomplishment and personal interaction" (Marsick and Watkins, 1999, p. 795); situated learning, informal learning concerned with the daily interaction with knowledge (Clancey, 1995); and self-directed learning, which is purpose-driven learning where others are perceived as valuable resources and contribute to the individual's learning (Towle and Cottrell, 1996; Schugurensky, 2000).

When individuals take on projects or any type of learning either in a team, due to their own initiative, and apart from the support of an educator or facilitator, that is viewed as self-directed learning. It is characterised as both intentional and conscious due to the intention of the learner to engage in a process before it commences. The learner is conscious because of the awareness of the activity of learning (Schugurensky, 2000). Self-directed learning is a process and described by Knowles (1975) as "diagnosing one's learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying resources for learning, implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes". For mentors to be exemplary role models, they should have a robust

understanding of the underlying construct of self-directed learning (van Schaik, Plant and O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 139).

Integrative learning, another form of informal learning, is concerned with adapting learning from one situation to deal with challenges in other situations (Miller, 2005). It is non-conscious and intentional and occurs through reflection and applying newly created knowledge to more complex situations (Bennett 2012). Mentor personal and professional knowledge is built from integrative learning initiatives and opportunities (Huber *et al.*, 2007). Whereas in formal teaching environments, integrative learning experiences are not always guaranteed for learners, as their integrative learning emanates from "disciplines, cultures, sub-cultures or life experiences" and kindles a scope of knowledge associated with their understanding (Klein, 2005, p. 9).

Four dimensions of informal learning presuppose each other: information, action, motivation, and emotion. They are interconnected and manifest in interaction. This does not mean that they are evident at the same time; each one could be at the forefront, depending on the context (Straka, 2009). Marsick (2001, p. 27) examined informal and incidental learning in organisations and asserts that this type of learning can occur from experiences and is central to adult learning due to its focus on the learner. The challenge of learning from experiences is that it is exceedingly broad. The continuum can range from outward-bound undertakings to computer-related experiences. Informal learning falls into the same classification as incidental learning, which occurs when people are unaware that they are learning. This type of learning includes self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring and performance planning.

Figure 5 below depicts an interpretation of informal and incidental learning in an organisation where context is fundamental. The model is circular, with steps that are neither linear nor sequential. This comprehensive framework outlines informal organisational learning in practice, but does not outline the "deeper human dimensions, that is, experience-based learning, including feelings and emotions. Also absent is the tacit knowledge occurring without the learner's knowledge, and communities of practice, which is socially situated learning" (Marsick, Watkins, Callahan, and Volpe, 2006, pp.796-797).

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Figure 5: Informal and Incidental Learning Model, as adapted by Cseh
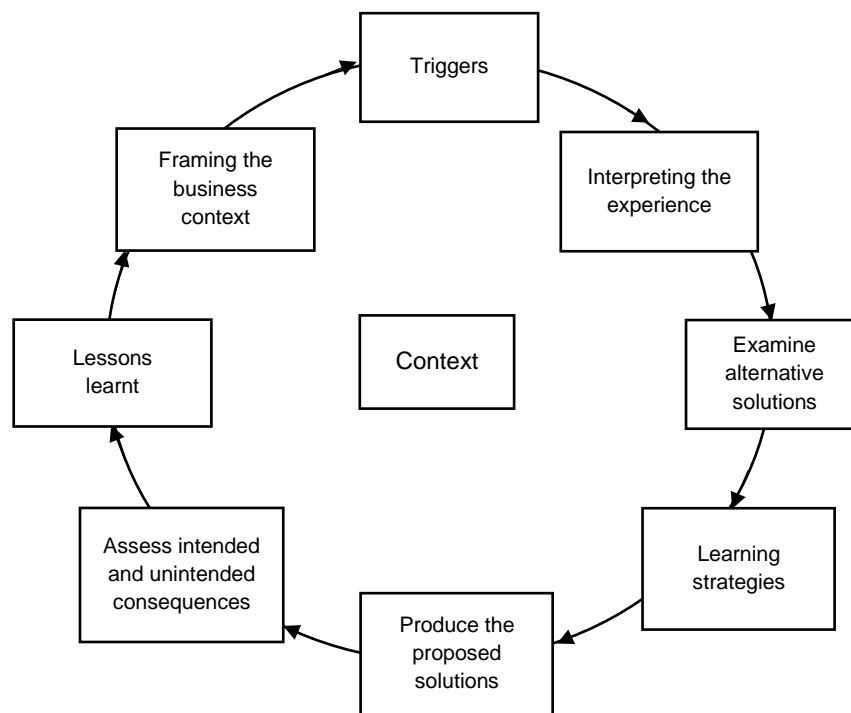
Source: Marsick and Watkins (2001, p. 29)

In the above framework, the core of learning is the given context, represented by the circle at the centre of the diagram. This type of learning is believed to develop from daily experiences and encounters. These experiences could originate from a challenge, a problem to be determined, or foresight. The context of the experience is represented by the outer circle, involving the individual, business, and social and cultural situations, and is fundamental in interpreting how people are influenced and how they enact what they learn. The model is also an illustration of the progression of sense-making in practice. With each experience and insight, people may have to revert to earlier experiences and understanding (Marsick *et al.*, 2001).

Although learning can be intentional, it can also be situational without being planned. In multiple situations, informal learning results in new knowledge only recognised in hindsight (Livingstone, 1999). However, learning has both external and internal outcomes. External consequences are evident when for example, something is handled and transformed; internal consequences occur when four dimensions of informal learning, i.e., information, action, motivation, and emotion, result in a tangible internal change for individuals. Personal change can thus be an outcome of learning and should be validated (Straka 2009).

2.5.1 Learning form reflection

Mentoring and reflection are a driver of learning for professionals, addressing strategies and problems. Reflection promotes intentionality and clarifies professional experiences (Wlodarsky and Carr-Chellman, 2020). Reflection is natural and familiar to most. After an experience, one analyses to discover new insights. From a personal perspective, reflection can occur in any setting where breakthroughs can be experienced. In organisations, analysis of and reflection on learning occurs formally through reports and performance reviews, whereas in our personal lives, it often occurs informally, including through counsellors or support groups (Daudelin, 1996). Through storytelling, mentors use the reflection of past experiences to recall critical skills, share management systems and their values and norms (Swap *et al.,* 2001).

In-the-moment reflection is a concept initiated by Dewey (1933) and Habermas (1971) and developed by Schön and Rein in 1977 and Schön in 1983 as reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action describes the immediate adjustment of action for a more considered exchange and finding ways to shift the conversation in an alternative direction. Schön highlighted this spontaneous way of thinking common in management and organisational studies, where professionals apply their "knowing in action" to challenges faced, leading to problem-solving (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009). However, as much as reflection is a tool used in professional practice, "it is interpreted differently from its involvement in learning from experience" (Moon, 2000, p. 3). Whilst Schön's argument of reflection-in-action contributes extensively to research and supports the experience of professionals in knowledge creation from an academic perspective, it does not include practical examples (Eraut, 1995).

If the process of self-reflection results in learning, an individual develops opinions on how to approach their external world differently than if they have not done any reflection. Reflection and learning can therefore be described as the "process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences; learning is the creation of meaning from past or current events that serves as a guide for future behaviour" (Daudelin, 1996, p. 39). Through dialogue, mentors could assess their experience to develop their learning within the context of mentorship practice. Appraising learning

opportunities for mentors fosters understanding of the unique needs required in future and helps with planning additional development. Furthermore, reflection could support psychosocial dimensions (Hansman, 2016)

"The richest and most meaningful source of knowledge that professionals acquire is through everyday work life and reflections on tasks. Mentoring relationships may foster many different types of learning, including critical reflection and critical co-constructing of knowledge (Cervero 1992 cited in Hansman 2016, p 25). This study examines whether mentors engage in reflective learning in mentorship and the influence of reflection on their learning. In doing so, it will build on Orland-Barak and Yinon's (2005) study of the dilemma that mentors experience when they encounter dissonance between their expert and novice knowledge.

2.5.2 Mentors and Knowledge gaps

Knowledge can enable a significant shift in an individual or institution, increasing their ability to perform various or effective actions (Jafari *et al.,* 2008). It is also common for mentors to be confronted with a gap in their understanding while mentoring a client. The experience of knowledge dissonance can lead to mentor discomfort and may cause them to question their professionalism and ability to mentor effectively (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005). Han, Han and Brass, (2014) confirm that when industry knowledge is not evenly balanced, knowledge disparity is high.

Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, (2008, p. 1097) similarly refer to a gap existing between the "knowledge possessed, and knowledge needed" to accomplish the desired goals. Mentors and experts are aware of knowledge discrepancies and the need to adapt existing knowledge in a new professional relationship to effectively support a new client (Langdon 2017, Daley, 1999; Schellenberg, Harker and Jafari, 2018). They must be encouraged to view knowledge dissonance positively, a condition conducive to learning (Orland-Barak and Yinon). Among other functions like "support, inspiration and motivation", Kubberoed and Hagen's (2015, p. 4066) analysis found that the overriding function of the mentor as a role model is "learning by example" and understanding the mentee's entrepreneurial context to ensure that support is customised to meet desired objectives (Ragins and Verbos 2017).

Although there is limited research on knowledge gaps, studies have been conducted that focus on organisations. Knowledge disparity in organisations can be formed when a distinct gap exists between knowledge resources and product development (Qiu, Wang and Nian, 2014). Cheng (2013), who looked at virtual industry clusters, describes the process of recognising a knowledge gap, where organisations initially "identify the gap, endogenous and exogenous demand, and supply of knowledge is analysed, supply and demand are matched, and finally, the gap is filled" (p. 3811). Qi *et al.,* (2020) and Zack (1999) have applied the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis-based approach to knowledge gaps to establish where knowledge needs to be filled. Cheng (2013) and Qi *et al.,* (2020), on the other hand, applied a strategic perspective using the VENN graph-based outlook, and Bai et al. (2010) used the index weight method.

Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles (2008) focus on perceived knowledge gaps and the internationalisation of enterprises also using the organisational learning perspective. An analysis of the SWOT approach, which considers an organisation's external environment, internal capabilities, and researched needs, illustrates the contradiction between an organisation's capability and its external environment, which creates the opportunity for strategic growth and performance. Under the internet+ environment (a progression of innovation and technology identified in China), the key to succeeding in competitive knowledge innovation would be the accurate recognition of external opportunities coupled with effective management decision-making in providing relevant gap-filling tactics (Qi *et al.*, 2020). Trying to imitate context-specific knowledge is challenging; tacit knowledge is entrenched in business processes and systems and advanced through experience. Other resources are easily accessible, but knowledge acquired by 'doing' is time-consuming and cannot be purchased or accelerated (Zack, 1999).

Formalised by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1970), the knowledge gap hypothesis suggests that "as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease" (Kwak, 1999). While this hypothesis focuses on the analysis of knowledge gaps from

a media perspective, what may be of interest to this study are the key concepts that could apply to individuals in their efforts to bridge the knowledge gap. "Prior knowledge level, age, medium of education, higher education, motivation and political interest" were identified as causes of widening knowledge gaps, with education found to be of minor importance (Horstmann, 1991: 80). Liu and Eveland Jr (2005) disagree by arguing that those who are more educated have a better ability to learn and close the knowledge gap. One could argue that those with high knowledge could feel more secure in being open and vulnerable to closing knowledge gaps compared to the less educated, as implied by Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005).

It is not easy to claim stability when knowledge is ambiguous and transient (Carson *et al.*, 2000). However, ever-changing bodies of knowledge and context create new opportunities. Management consultants, who like mentors are often viewed as experts, are sometimes linked to feeble knowledge, mysterious competencies, and convincing tools. Regardless of their perceived weak knowledge, they provide attractive frameworks to clients. Single case studies have limited applicability in other contexts, and the significance of a practice in one sector may not be applicable in another. Therefore knowledge for mentors is rarely only concerning skill and technical expertise but is concerned with developing relationships (Fincham *et al.*, 2008) and closing knowledge disparities.

The process of integrating knowledge can create knowledge gaps. For international firms entering a foreign market, they may find that they have a limited amount of pertinent knowledge needed to succeed in that market. This is when they experience the painful realisation of the practical differences between their home and foreign markets. This leads to the issue of risk tolerance or aversion. Managers who are risk averse in this context will only extend their resources under tolerable risk when facing knowledge gaps instead of fully committing themselves and the available organisational resources (Petersen, Pedersen and Lyles, 2008). Whilst the SWOT analysis is beneficial for long-term planning, it is unsuitable for identifying gaps rapidly. The VENN approach, which is qualitative, discounts the relationship between the gravity of identified knowledge gaps and expert experience (Qi *et al.*, 2020).

Because an extended period of learning involves a kind of "knowledge friction" (Zack, 1999, p. 130), that is knowledge drawn from multiple directions (Sher, 2016), it is essential to conduct a situational analysis of a firm to identify their level of knowledge and how it can be used for performance and growth (Zack 1999). According to small venture owners, contributing factors for the limited uptake of advice received include "market knowledge and the uncertainty surrounding relationships" within the advice-giving process (Mole, 2021, p, 205). Possible tensions between the entrepreneur and their advisor may be applicable due to varied leadership styles where the entrepreneur may have a less formal approach to conducting business. To gain pertinent information to support their client, trust is key in the relationship between an entrepreneur and an advisor (Mole, 2021). Zack's (1999) view of an organisational situation analysis is that it should emphasise the significance of bridging a strategic knowledge gap through understanding what a firm knows and must know and what they can do and must do.

In conclusion to this section on mentorship, the outcomes, roles, and functions have been drawn from previous studies, with little distinction and expression from the mentor and specifically the entrepreneurial mentor. Neither has the influence of the mentee's context been at the forefront of research to benefit our holistic understanding, and to enrich current literature. The contributions Ragins and Kram's (2007, p. 675) on the role of context in the mentoring process and outcomes are organisation centric. They focus on "(1) the organisation's role in fostering mentoring relationships, (2) the effects of diversity climate and norms, (3) the role of leadership in mentoring, (4) the impact of technology on mentoring, and (5) the role of societal culture in shaping mentoring processes and outcomes".

What works in mentoring is known and understood. However, what remains opaque and needs clarification are the drivers, setting and underlying experiences within the process (Ragins and Kram, 2007). More specifically, there is a limited view of internal and external contextual factors that affect the mentor, process, and outcomes of entrepreneurial mentoring. The following section focuses on entrepreneurial context, with emphasis on the mentor's client (the mentee/entrepreneur); it will contribute to our understanding of mentee contextual considerations to be made by mentors in the relationship, and clarify mentee orientation, freedoms, and constraints.

2.5.3 Knowledge

On multiple occasions, mentors find themselves in circumstances that require them to "prove their expertise to others" (Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005, p. 574). The expert learner can be distinguished from their novice peers by their skill, knowledge and ability to execute timed strategies and identify certain knowledge gaps needed to achieve desired goals (Ertmer and Newby, 1996; Daley, 1999). While explicit learning is essential for experts, learning from practice is key and is described by medical experts as a more active, self-directed experience.

Given that learning in an entrepreneurial context is experiential and dynamic (Patton and Marlow, 2011), entrepreneurial mentors, like experts need to have some insight into the "expertise, experience, learning and knowledge compilation" (Daley, 1999, p. 136) required for them to perform their mentoring role effectively. Also, delivering advice is a learning process which develops over time, the knowledge gained is a product of information exchange on problems to be solved (Bennett and Robson, 2005). Hawamdeh (2003, p. 17) confirms that knowledge gained is like a "fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information". Knowledge that is not communicated or actioned is not useful. Only once it is transferred through training, socialisation, and interaction, can be acted upon.

While interest in managing knowledge has grown extensively since the mid-1990s, extending to organisational practice, academia and conferences, the literature on knowledge from an economic and organisational perspective has a much longer history. The recognition of the significance of knowledge stems from "Adam Smith in the 18th century to Alfred Marshall in the 19th, Friedrich Hayek and Edith Penrose in the early and mid-20th century" (Hyman 1999, p. 31). Penrose (1959) wrote about the dominance of knowledge in economic processes and regarded the phenomena of knowledge as a challenge to grasp (Norman, 2004). The efficient use of information and how it differs from knowledge is of particular interest to academics in management research. Therefore, an acceptable explanation of how knowledge is acquired should be included to appease the sceptic who questions through epistemology whether one does know what they claim to know (Nonaka, 1994; Hyman, 1999).

A distinction can also be drawn between personal and impersonal knowledge. One is cognitive, and the other is social. Michael Polanyi is well known for his philosophical work on personal knowledge. He defined personal knowledge as what is today known as tacit knowledge, and influenced Ikujiro Nonaka, whose studies on tacit knowledge and knowledge creation have attracted a new audience (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka et al., 1994, 1995). Tacit knowledge is said to be prominent in advancing sustainable competitive advantage (Nonaka, 1991). It is personal, can be transferred through metaphor and analogy, and is stored in a person's mind. Explicit knowledge on the other hand, is often digital, collected and recorded in a manner that makes it easy to access (Cheng, 2018). While some may argue that tacit and explicit knowledge cannot be separated, the two forms of knowledge emphasise focus on the entire knowledge base as knowledge is drawn from internal sources and external networks (Johannessen, Olaisen and Olsen, 2001; Jasimuddin, Klein and Connell, 2005).

Tacit knowledge comes naturally, without time to process thoughts, and is related to mental modes intertwined in values, perceptions, understanding and suppositions. It can also be described as technical if it involves mastering a distinct body of knowledge or the creative use of competence in particular situations. Tacit knowledge within organisational environments is advantageous because it is context-specific (Zack, 1999). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is more technical or systematic and derived from academic data or formal information that can quickly be disseminated (Smith, 2001). Boisot (1987) differentiates knowledge into codified and uncodified: "codified knowledge describes readily transmittable knowledge, whilst uncodified knowledge is that which cannot easily be transmitted" (Tzortzaki and Mihiotis, 2014, p. 29). When explicit knowledge is codified, it becomes valuable and can be used to solve challenges (Smith, 2001).

Practitioners prefer to view tacit knowledge management as tacit knowledge sharing due to the interactivity of the term "sharing" rather than the structured nature of "management" that occurs in organisations. Mentoring dyads, are believed to be the most effective context for tacit knowledge sharing (Engström, 2003). Surprisingly, formal mentoring programmes were found to be the least likely to share and transfer knowledge management practices. This was prevalent in technical mentoring and apprenticeships (Economiques, 2004). Othman and Abdullah (2012) agree and assert

the uncommonness of tacit knowledge being shared and transferred based on its subjectivity and intuitive nature, contradicting the foundation of entrepreneurial mentoring. However, these findings could be industry specific as mentoring continues to be favoured as a form of tacit knowledge transmission across multiple sectors. Knowledge built during entrepreneurial advice-giving is unique and specific to the entrepreneur or enterprise. Therefore, a significant part of advice-giving is concerned with sharing tacit knowledge. However, while the entrepreneur benefits from receiving advice by gaining tacit knowledge, it is unclear whether there are similar benefits for the advisor (Lobacz *et al.*, 2016). The third research sub-question in this study seeks to address the possible benefits to mentor expertise and practice when it comes to knowledge shared in a new mentoring relationship, and anticipates bringing certainty to Lobacz *et al's*., (2016) assertion.

2.6   Conclusion

People live in environments that are a "varied succession of transactional life events" where individuals influence the trajectory of their personal development. The progress made in the lives of individuals like entrepreneurial mentors is formed by an interchange between "personal factors and diverse influences in ever-changing societies" (Bandura, 2006, p. 1). The aim to integrate, understand and evaluate mentorship, entrepreneurial context and informal learning literature has been achieved. Whilst theses three domains are not known to have been previously linked, they are visibly inter-related.

This review has confirmed the insufficiency in focus on entrepreneurial mentoring and precisely the entrepreneurial mentor's experience.   What is understood are the functions and roles of mentors anticipated to support entrepreneurs with complex contexts. Also shown is that learning is an outcome for mentors. Included in the review is the knowledge by mentors of the existence of knowledge gaps when they initiate a new relationship. Knowledge transfer is what mentors are recognised for (Swap *et al.,* 2001). Therefore, what remains unclear is how mentors gain the required knowledge to meet the needs of varied mentee contexts particularly in a new relationship, and how they go about establishing that knowledge within a process, and in practice.

Understanding the role that bridging context-related knowledge gaps play in mentor learning in new relationships is fundamental to our insight into how mentors offer valuable, timely and effective support. The next chapter is a context chapter focusing on the South African entrepreneurial external context, this will provide the contextual landscape where the research was conducted.

3. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1   Introduction

Whilst entrepreneurial mentoring is evident in formal mentorship programmes in South Africa (Masutha and Rogerson, 2014; Lose and Tengeh, 2015; Lose *et al.*, 2016), scope for improving understanding of contextual synergies is essential. There appears to be a disconnect between entrepreneurial mentors, researchers, and government efforts. South African entrepreneurial mentors affirm their proficiency in relational, personal and professional capabilities to fulfil their role (Melodi and Elriza, 2012). On the other hand, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report suggests that mentors have been reluctant to offer any support and have no intention to share their entrepreneurial and/or business knowledge with entrepreneurs. In addition, the report states that government programmes have failed to provide centralised entrepreneurial support, mainly through mentorship programmes (Herrington, Mike; Kew, 2017). This chapter intends to provide insight into several external contextual dimensions affecting entrepreneurial mentoring and mentors, the temporal, institutional, and sociocultural factors (Wright and Stigliani 2013; Autio *et al.,* 2014) specific to the South African context. It will also provide insight into certain symbolic and social boundaries underpinning this study.

3.2   Temporal environment

While there are similarities between entrepreneurial activity and mentorship in the West and developing countries, there are differences in the contextual dynamics experienced by entrepreneurial mentors due to the variance in socio-economic and cultural challenges experienced by mentees (Akpey-Mensah and Muchie, 2019). Four broad and yet vital dimensions of entrepreneurial context are accentuated by Zahra and Wright (2014), that is, business, social, spatial, and institutional, while temporal or time-related definitions remain fragmented. Historical factors are of particular significance in South Africa, as the legacy of Apartheid still haunts the entrepreneurial contextual space. The effects of history on geographical boundaries imposed on entrepreneurship (spatial), the limitations of daily life (institutional), the disempowerment of 90% of the population (social), and policies that opt for quick wins

from a business perspective (business), all confirm that "history does indeed matter" (Swartz, Amatucci and Marks, 2019, p. 4) as a contextual factor also to be considered by mentors.

South Africans share a rare history that brings a recognisable and yet distinct sense of relationship to each other. Often referred to as the 'rainbow nation' (Baines, 1998), the country is culturally heterogeneous (Urban, 2006). It is one of the most "racially and ethnically complex societies in the world", comprising five major ethnic groups: Khoisan (Bushmen), Nguni, European, a mixed-race population, and Asians – mostly of Indian origin (Afọlayan and Afolayan, 2004). Out of 34 previously established languages, the Constitution now recognises 11 official languages. While English is mainly used in media, urban and business circles, Afrikaans (a version of Dutch) is spoken by most of the non-black population apart from South African Indians (Alexander, 2021).

To fully grasp South Africa's development after the decades of racial segregation under Apartheid, and the influence of the varied cultural values and inclination towards entrepreneurship (Urban, 2006), it is helpful to take a brief view of the country's recent history. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa, one of the largest economies in Africa (Joshua, Adedoyin and Sarkodie, 2020), has attempted to make significant strides in improving the lives and well-being of what is referred to as the previously disadvantaged (non-white) population. However, the country's economic growth has stagnated in the last decade (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020b). In 1998, the then Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, memorably referred to South Africa as a country of two nations. He meant that there were the wealthy minority, a predominantly previously advantaged (white) population, and those previously excluded from mainstream wealth (Mbeki 1998). Fast-forward 24 years, and the divide remains prominent (Kitis, Milani and Levon, 2018).

The change from an initially thriving and promising administration to a culture of corrupt political gain has created a yearning among many South Africans for a return to the period before rampant corruption (Friedman, 2021). The poverty line was projected at 60% for 2020, underpinned by sluggish structural development, minimal growth, and a youth unemployment rate of 64% (Webb Sidney, 2019), with the country

topping the global charts for both aggregate (29%) and youth unemployment (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2022). Of the five emerging economies of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), South Africa is the most challenged regarding unemployment (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020b). The absence of options for suitable livelihoods, high unemployment rate, poor economic growth, and excessive competition for job opportunities compel people into necessity-driven entrepreneurship (Herrington, M., Kew, P., Mwanga, 2017).

Like most global economies, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are expected to drive economic growth and employment creation. However, this is currently a hard ask in South Africa. For South Africans battling to secure consistent work, Plan B would be to create self-employment through entrepreneurship. Because entrepreneurship currently occurs in an underperforming economic environment, examples of challenges faced by entrepreneurs include access to finance, overpriced mobile data, over-regulated bureaucratic challenges and labour restrictions (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2022). Most entrepreneurs self-finance or are supported by family; this is typical of any start-up (Masutha and Rogerson, 2014).

According to Urban (2006), South Africa has traditionally had a robust wage-labour culture underpinned by affirmative-action policies. Therefore, entrepreneurship is not considered an appropriate or suitable occupation for most. The fear of possible failure and a risk-averse mentality are likely to have limited entrepreneurial intentions among South Africans, while the lack of access to role models may further have impacted entrepreneurial activity. The fear of failure experienced by prospective entrepreneurs is at 48.8% and has increased gradually since 2001. While entrepreneurial intention in Africa is at 40%, South African intention is at 11.9%. This figure is influenced by nationwide social values and the level of entrepreneurial culture (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020a).

3.3   Institutional environment

In Africa, South Africa is a leader in most commercial sectors and is second to Nigeria as the most industrialised economy. Like many countries, the lack of economic growth

has been compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bowmaker-Falconer, and Meyer, 2022). For a large part of the population, becoming an entrepreneur has become the only feasible route to formal employment, particularly during the pandemic. Therefore, more knowledge needs to be developed on entrepreneurship, mainly through programmes linking youth to entrepreneurship (Masha *et al.*, 2022). The government has supported small businesses through various financial and mentorship initiatives (Bowmaker-Falconer, and Meyer, 2022). These include the National Gazelles, the Relief Finance Scheme (South African Government, no date), Khula, the National Empowerment Fund, Ntsika (Ayer, 2010) and the Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) programmes (Economic Research, 2016).

In 2019, the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) committed to supporting economic transformation by providing small businesses with the necessary support, with the guidance of legislation and policy mandates, as shown below in *Table 7*. Guided by the National Small Enterprise Act 1996, Industrial Development Corporation Act 1940, and the Cooperatives Development Act 2005, the department has committed to providing financial, registration and other support to SMEs. In 2021, the DSBD announced that 100 enterprise incubators would provide full backing to small businesses through "high-touch mentoring" focused on their rapid growth with the support of existing government and higher learning institution infrastructure (DSBD, 2021, p. 10). Despite these efforts, entrepreneurs still do not make meaningful contributions to economic growth and social development (Bowmaker-Falconer and Meyer, 2022).

Table 7: South African legislation and policy mandates

Legislation and policy	Mandate and primary outputs
National Small Enterprise Act 1996, (No.102 of 1996), as amended.	To develop, support and promote small enterprises to ensure their growth and sustainability. Seda provides non-financial business development and support services for small enterprises in partnership with other role-players in the small business development environment.
Section 3(d) of the Industrial Development Corporation Act, No.22 of 1940 (IDC Act)	To provide access to finance to Survivalist, Micro, Small and Medium businesses throughout South Africa. **sefa** supports the development of sustainable SMMEs through the provision of finance.
Cooperatives Development Act, 2005 (No. 14 of 2005), as amended.	To provide for the formation and registration of Cooperatives. The establishment of a Cooperatives Advisory Board; the winding up of Cooperatives; the repeal of Act 91 of 1981; and matters connected therewith.

Source: Department of Small Business Development, Annual Report 2020/21 (p. 27)

Another factor affecting the entrepreneurial context is the complexity of implementing black economic empowerment (BEE), which developed into broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE). This government initiative was enforced in 2003, intending to facilitate broader economic participation for citizens previously disadvantaged by the Apartheid regime (Southall, 2021). The BBBEE Act's (2003) mandate includes enhancing entrepreneurial activity through private and public sector upliftment. However, because entrepreneurship for many is necessity-driven, entrepreneurs lack foundational skills to effectively deliver on products and services (Bowmaker-Falconer, 2022).

Figure 6 below shows recent indicators of South Africa's economic and entrepreneurship landscape, ranging from high youth unemployment to research and development spending as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP). It highlights how much focused transformation is needed for the country's economy and entrepreneurial ecosystem, including investment in entrepreneurial mentors for their vital contribution to supporting the sustainability of small businesses.

Figure 6: Overview of the South African economy and entrepreneurship, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

66,7% Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years)
63,7% Gini-coefficient
50% Individuals with below upper secondary education (Grade 9 or lower)
45,9% Share of young individuals (25-35 years) who have below upper secondary education
43,8% Youth unemployment rate (25-34 years)
35,3% Official unemployment rate
31% Individuals with upper secondary education (Grade 10 to 12) or post-secondary non-tertiary qualification
15,8% Individuals with a tertiary qualification
13,7% Percentage of GDP spent on Gross Fixed Capital Formation
12,4% Graduate unemployment rate
8,3% The cost of crime to businesses as a percentage of turnover
4% Percentage of GDP of the African continent's combined spending on infrastructure
0,89% FDI inflow as a percentage of GDP (average between 2015 to 2020)
0,83% GERD (R&D spending as a proportion of GDP)

Source: Bowmaker-Falconer and Meyer, 2022, (p. 35)

Because a key mandate of the National Small Enterprise Act is to develop, support and promote small enterprises to ensure their growth and sustainability (DSBD, 2021, p. 27), the SEDA was formed in 2004 to execute a significant portion of the DSBD's strategy and realise the government's commitment to developing SMEs. Additionally, the National Development Plan's Vision 2030 reaffirms the government's commitment to enhance their ecosystem, with a pledge to generate 11 million new employment opportunities through SMEs (Masutha and Rogerson, 2014). Although the country has no professional regulatory body for entrepreneurial mentors per se, Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) is a globally and locally self-regulated body with the primary role of credentialing professionals (COMENSA, no date).

Necessity-driven entrepreneurship is typically high in developing countries, without a "security blanket", i.e., government social security benefits, opportunity-driven enterprises are more likely to survive than necessity-driven enterprises (Herrington, M., Kew, P., Mwanga, 2017). The average Total Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rate for the African region in 2019 was 12.1%; South Africa's TEA was below the average at 10.8%. The business discontinuity rate, which reflects the number of businesses

closing compared to those opening, has increased from 3.5% in 2019 to 4.9% in 2020. In spite of those markers, social perceptions of entrepreneurship in South Africa are positive, helping to shape the entrepreneurial culture in the country. Positive attitudes regarding entrepreneurship as a career option have increased from 69% in 2017 to 78% in 2019 (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020b).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report is optimistic about entrepreneurial activity in South Africa and its future impact. The report suggests a 9.4% increase in people considering entrepreneurship as a career option (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020b). However, the question to ask is whether people have a choice, considering the high unemployment rate, limited access to funding, minimal access to entrepreneurial opportunities, lack of knowledge, and a decline in demand, according to a McKinsey and Company report (Kalidas, Mafwentshu, and Rajagopaul, 2020).

3.4   Sociocultural context

While the South African government has made strides towards increasing awareness of entrepreneurship and fostering an entrepreneurial culture, there is still a significant gap in the entrepreneurial ecosystem for supporting entrepreneurs with ideal mentors. The entrepreneurial context indicates that necessity-driven entrepreneurs will likely increase as the economy takes an adverse turn. Therefore, nurturing entrepreneurs through mentoring is paramount. South African entrepreneurial mentors who participated in this study are educated, skilled and experienced in both intrapreneurship and/or entrepreneurship and have the experience of being mentored. They have rich and varied knowledge; however, their motivation to mentor is mainly influenced by the country's history. What stands out is the legacy of the historical divide between previously advantaged and disadvantaged segments of the population, and how this has influenced individual mentor incentives to support entrepreneurs.

Connecting with an entrepreneur highly depends on the entrepreneurial activity in a particular area and the beliefs associated with entrepreneurship (Bosma, *et al.,* 2021). Being introduced to other entrepreneurs, particularly role models from the same

situation and community, strongly affects the decision of aspiring entrepreneurs to start a business and reduces their fear of failure. Therefore, understanding role models is critical for understanding entrepreneurial behaviours and actions (Wyrwich, Sternberg and Stuetzer, 2019).

As culture resides in people's minds, institutions and social spaces, directing people's actions without appreciating their norms and values can be challenging (Hofstede, 1984). A distinctive feature of South Africans is how their language reflects their culture. Certain expressions of language, for example, referring to people by the colour of their skin to give a more profound portrayal, are part of the country's history. The reference to people by their race is a common way to describe other people and oneself. Culture shapes how people relate to each other (Chentsova-Dutton and Vaughn, 2012). Hofstede, (1984) describes cultural collectivism as interdependent relationships where certain members of a tight-knit society expect others to care for them in exchange for dependability. This theory of community also involves people seeing themselves through others. In collectivism, the group is seen as stronger than the individual regarding knowledge (Lucas, 2006). As a nation, South Africans perceive themselves as interconnected by communal bonds. Community is based on geographical location and shared memory of a collective history. Trust anchors psychological community, collaboration and altruism, and may involve sharing a common vision (Muxe Nkondo, 2007).

3.4.1 The Ubuntu philosophy

The Ubuntu philosophy which encourages togetherness and emphasises the effect of individual actions on others, is an underlying storyline for most South Africans. The philosophy is a way of life practised throughout Africa. It was reignited during a key post-apartheid period by President Thabo Mbeki, Nelson Mandela's successor. Ubuntu describes that "all humanity has a common origin and, *ipso facto,* belongs together. It creates a common bond and destiny for humanity. The individual is absorbed into the collective, yet retains an identity as an empirical being" (Nkondo, 2007, p. 89). Hence, "I am because you are, and you are because we are, and my humanity is caught up and bound up in yours". Ubuntu, alien to Western culture, is viewed as an ontology or way of being (Geber and Keane, 2017, p. 501).

A shared sense of responsibility stems from relationships, specifically from Ubuntu (Nussbaum, 2003). It is often assumed that mentoring programmes in South Africa, including within organisations, are premised on Ubuntu. However, there is little knowledge of how an Ubuntu-centred mentoring relationship is conducted. What is prevalent in organisations is that more experienced, often senior white executives, mentor young, less experienced, often black colleagues under the umbrella of Ubuntu without an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the word and its deep-seated roots and values. Understanding that the concept of Ubuntu comes with principles like respecting elders and experts is key for intercultural mentoring relationships (Geber and Keane, 2017).

Geber and Keane, (2017) suggest seven culturally embedded principles that apply to the mentorship relationship in practice in the African organisational and Ubuntu context which include 1) awareness – constant evaluation of interaction success, 2) time and commitment – a level of respect for the pace and process, 3) respect – a fundamental value, specifically the use of language, 4) explicit and cultural references – recognition of different views, 5) inclusion – means of both parties feeling involved in the practice, 6) care – the "underlying modality that underpins community and interconnection 7) story – story telling, powerful in the learning process, relationship and exploration. These are key considerations and support a successful dyadic relationship.

There are various reasons why people choose to give advice, including to display their ability and knowledge and to inspire or bond with others (Horowitz et al., 2006). South Africans use formal mentoring objectives and methods that are wide-ranging and culturally sensitive. Mentors and mentees are likely to have different ethnic backgrounds and use different analysis structures (Geber and Keane, 2017). The history of South Africa's interconnectedness with socio-cultural aspects is intriguing, particularly if it influences the demeanour of mentors. Ubuntu, like mentoring is a "relationship-centred paradigm" (p.10). Perhaps future studies will be an opportunity for mentors to honour both "their worldview and values and still benefit from the experience," and knowledge of mentoring. Perhaps there lies a greater sensitivity to the embedded mentor approach to mentorship that draws a uniquely South African perspective to mentorship because of Ubuntu values (Gerber and Keane 2017, p. 8).

Individual learning within an organisation for example, through channels such as mentoring is vital if that organisation is to develop and grow. Tacit knowledge sharing is grounded on affect-based and cognitive-based trust. Examining the source of the affect-based trust is vital as a social categorisation could be used to make assessments of individuals (Holste and Fields, 2010). What needs to be understood further is the process of learning in a specific cultural context and how knowledge sharing takes place both formally and explicitly and informally and implicitly. It requires a language or structure to capture and communicate the learning (Kim, 1998). In some societies, it is common to be advised without asking for it, while in other societies, the individual has to request advice as a form of support (Chentsova-Dutton and Vaughn, 2012), the latter being formal mentoring.

3.5   Conclusion

Entrepreneurial mentoring in South Africa is complicated and requires mentors to consider context with a multidimensional lens. While the government has made strides in supporting the scaling of SMEs, entrepreneurial mentor support remains an area to be explored, and invested in, to be better understood and to alleviate possibly unsubstantiated mentor perceptions. The history of South Africa's interconnectedness with socio-cultural aspects is intriguing, particularly if it influences the demeanour of mentors. Ubuntu, like mentoring is a "relationship-centred paradigm" (p.10). Perhaps future studies will be an opportunity for mentors to honour both "their worldview and values and still benefit from the experience," and knowledge of mentoring. Perhaps there lies a greater sensitivity to the embedded mentor approach to mentorship that draws a uniquely South African perspective to mentorship because of Ubuntu values (Gerber and Keane 2017, p.8). This chapter has given an overview of the study's temporal, institutional, and sociocultural contextual landscape. The next chapter focuses on the study's methodological approach.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the chosen methodology for this study and the logic (Cuervo-Cazurra *et al.*, 2016) behind the choices made. It also includes other methodological principles relevant to the context. It describes how the research was conducted and the "theoretical and philosophical assumptions" that form its foundation (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 808). It evaluates the fit between pertinent paradigms and the research questions underpinning this study. It includes sampling methods and respondent profiles. It discusses the methods of data analysis used, the research protocol and the constraints and limitations of the study.

This thesis seeks to understand the meanings and interpretations of mentor experience by examining the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in new mentorship relationships. Interpretivism forms the philosophical foundation of this study. It is known to induce the deep understanding of a phenomena, including its complexities and context through qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Fundamental to interpretivist methodology is considering the role of "meanings, beliefs, and feelings" in understanding social experiences.   This approach supports contextualised interpretations of experiences, acknowledging the unavoidable subjectivity of the researcher and the researched, including the subjective nature of the situated meaning (Yanow, 2014).

An interpretivist theory-building (Jennings, Perren and Carter, 2005; Arshed *et al.*, 2020) approach is also adopted in this thesis. In-so-doing, it is fundamental to acknowledge the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Thus, rigour from the outset of the study is required. This research investigates the domain inhabited by the participants and the cohesions and variances in the subjective interpretation of their experiences (Lopez and Willis, 2004). Conversely, a positivist approach, characterised by objective logic, is challenged by recognising interpretive methodologies as steadfast on their own merit. Interpretive studies are often viewed from a positivist lens as complementary to positivist perspectives. However, it requires an unbiased

assessment and regard for both approaches to research as "philosophically and logically equal" (Falconer and Mackay, 1999, p. 626).

This qualitative study seeks to gain a better understanding of mentor experience shared through semi-structured interviews with mentors as primary data sources is gained through this qualitative study. Mentees were also interviewed to examine their contribution to the aim. This kind of research facilitates the description of experiences and "life-worlds from the inside-out" (p. 4). It helps broaden our understanding of the social realities of the participants and draws our attention to their practices, processes, meaningful patterns and the structural entities that contribute to their experience (Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke, (2004). This kind of approach is aligned with mentorship practice and process. Qualitative research allows the researcher to consider multiple layers of context. The researcher's attention to context is key in seeking to understand practices, how they function, and how they affect experience. (Patton and Marlow, 2011).

While self-reported data collection using surveys and questionnaires is a research method that provides recognised coverage and confidence in results, alternative methods like qualitative approaches are often needed to verify the validity of data obtained through surveys (Koberg *et al.*, 1994; Ragins, 1997; Allen, Poteet and Russell, 2000; Noe, Greenberger and Wang, 2002). Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for "opening the black box of organisational processes, the *how*, *who* and *why* of individual and collective organised action as it unfolds over time in context" (Doz, 2011, p. 583).

4.2 Research questions

The phenomenon analysed in this study is mentorship from an entrepreneurial perspective, integrated with entrepreneurial context and informal learning. Entrepreneurial mentorship typically occurs in a dyad and has been described as an activity within a process that involves a proficient entrepreneur (mentor) supporting a less experienced entrepreneur (mentee) with the goal of developing the mentee's skills and knowledge (St-Jean, 2012). The unit of analysis in this study is the mentor,

and their entrepreneurial mentorship experience. The literature review in Chapter 2 and the discussion of the South African context in Chapter 3, have demonstrated the connectedness of mentorship with entrepreneurial context and informal learning. the three domains that support the following research questions:

How does bridging contextual knowledge gaps inform the entrepreneurial mentor's informal learning in a new mentorship relationship?

Sub-questions:

i) How do entrepreneurial mentors respond to new contextual knowledge gaps in a manner that informs their learning in early interactions with mentees?

ii) How do entrepreneurial mentors learn and adapt their existing entrepreneurial knowledge with new contextual knowledge while mentoring?

iii) How does learnt context shape the mentor's professional knowledge and mentorship practice?

4.3 Research design

This chapter discusses and justifies the choice of framework designed to respond to the research questions (Groenewald, 2004). This is a strategy outlining a vital stage which cannot be over-emphasised. It also demonstrates researcher reflection on the study elements (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The justifications include the selection of "data sources, collection methods, and analysis techniques" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornton, 2019, p.815). To achieve the desired aim and answer the research questions in a robust manner, the research design illustrated below in *Figure 7* is the framework specifying the essential process undertaken in this study. This "blueprint" enables the researcher to complete the study effectively (Sreejesh, 2014, p. 27).
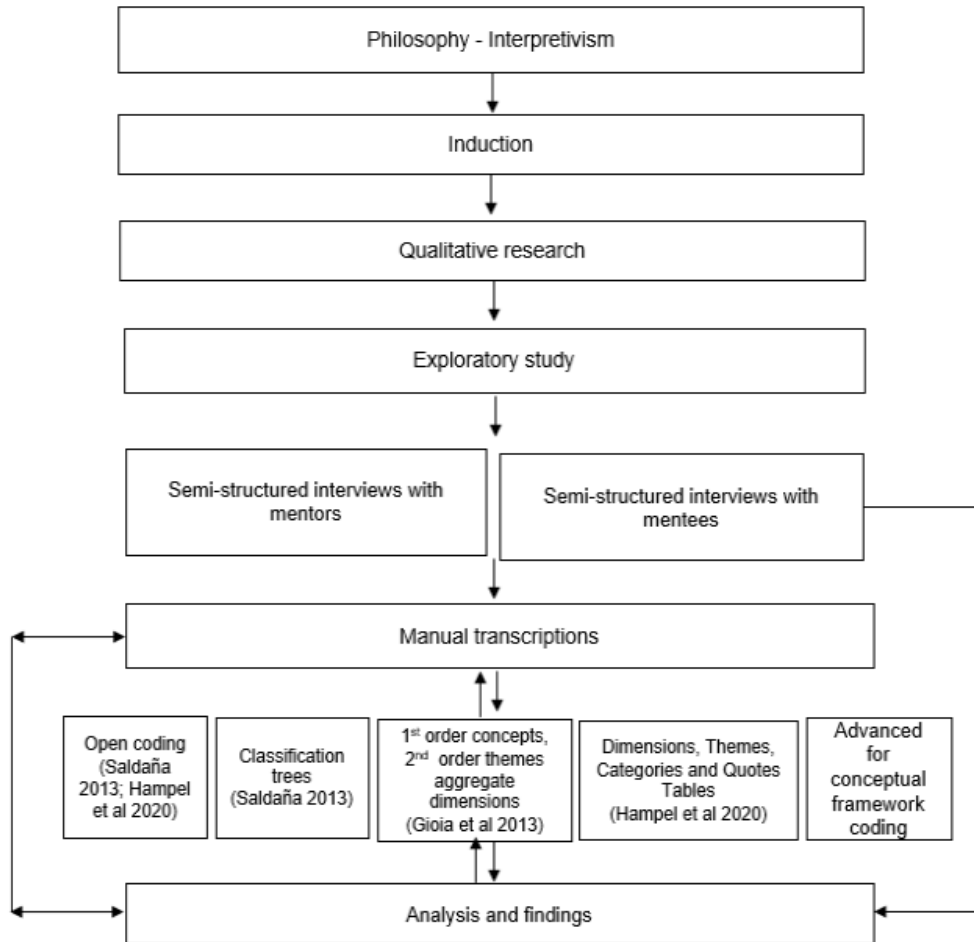
Figure 7: Research design

4.4 Philosophical approach

4.4.1 Introduction

Modern sociology emerged from the works of Marx (1818–83), Weber (1864–1920) and Durkheim (1858–1917), who were highly regarded theorists that analysed changing European society. Thereafter, anthropological fieldwork was advanced by the likes of Evans Pritchard (1902–73), Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) and Malinowski (1884–1942). After World War II, there was a shift in emphasis concerning which research techniques produced the most reliable data. Paul Lazarfeld (1901–70) emphasised the objectiveness of data, uninfluenced by the researcher. He argued for data-collecting techniques that were unbiased (McNeill, 2005).

Structuration theory emerged in the 1980s under the influence of Anthony Giddens. He aimed to "show how aspects of the social structure of society, particularly social class, ethnicity and gender interact with social meanings held by social actors to bring about or constrain social action" (p. 5). In other words, his intention was to illustrate how people's actions reflect how they interpret their social reality; however, their choice of action is regulated by structural factors that they are unable to control. The 1990s witnessed the emergence of a postmodernist critique of research practice, which suggested that objective realities do not exist as the researcher is a mere interpreter of reality; this also challenges the concept of validity (McNeill, 2005, p. 5–6).

The most ideal research philosophies, methodologies and paradigms in management and business studies remain contested (Noe, 1988; Deetz, 1996; Grant and Perren, 2002; Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2011; Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012; Alvarez *et al.*, 2017). The differences, critiques, and arguments in expanding multiple approaches remain vital to this type of research. Academic disciplines in business and management have subsequently progressed by capturing the combination of disciplines resulting in various co-existing philosophies (Saunders et al. 2016). While studies such as this seek to understand human behaviour from participants' perspectives, a large amount of attention needs to be given to the subjective state of the participants, particularly the meaning rather than the measurement of their experiences (Hussey and Hussey 1997, p. 53).

Interpretivism is a branch of epistemology and involves the researcher interpreting subjective data (O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015). Therefore, the epistemology informs the research questions. The way assumptions are made and communicated is the essence of epistemology. It concerns the type of knowledge researchers can obtain and whether that knowledge has alternate responses, is "softer, subjective, spiritual or of a transcendent nature" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 1). The essence of our insight is addressed by epistemology, often valuable for management and business studies as it sheds light on different personal views of organisational reality. (Forouharfar, Rowshan and Salarzehi, 2018). This approach can offer "rich and complex views and accounts for differences in individual contexts and experiences; and proposes a new understanding" (Saunders *et al.*, "2019, p. 134).

4.4.2 Interpretivism.

Interpretivism, the "scientific philosophy that affirms that social order emerges from intentional action and interaction at the individual level" (Packard, 2017, p. 536) was deemed appropriate for this study. It is ideal for a study concerning mentoring that seeks to understand in-depth meanings of a phenomenon embedded in context (Devey Burry *et al.*, 2020)**.** Interpretivism is rooted in philosophical beliefs of naturalistic (Putman and Banghart, 2017) hermeneutics, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, with Max Weber being credited for its emergence (Chowdhury, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019; Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). An argument for interpretivism is the study of the social world compared to a physical phenomenon. "Different people of different cultural backgrounds, under different circumstances, and at different times make different meanings, and so create and experience different social realities (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p. 149).

Schutz (1899–1959) emphasised the fundamental difference between the subject matter of the natural sciences and social sciences, emphasising the meaningfulness of human beings and their actions. He also emphasised the critical role of social scientists in gaining access to the thinking of human beings and interpreting their subsequent actions and the social world from their point of view (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 242). Circumstance and events leading to the advancement of social realities are associated with social science research and interpretivism (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Interpretivist researchers focus on the particular manner and context in which relationships occur (Chowdbury, 2014; and Lin, 1998). This exploratory study is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the influence of contextual knowledge gaps as mentors navigate through learning and mentorship.

The methodological approach of interpretivist studies like this research, is qualitative and inductive. It recognises two distinct features in interpretive processes (Lowenberg, 1993) and meaning (Yanow, 2014). Powerful accounts of personal experiences can rapidly lead to fundamental change (Quinlan 2011, p. 184), and in interpretivism, these accounts are linked to context (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). This study's sub-questions examine mentor a) response, b) adaptation, and c) influence of new

contextual knowledge gaps, and their impression on mentor learning in a new mentorship relationship are aligned to mentor accounts of personal experiences. Mentor interpretation focuses on bridging contextual knowledge gaps, to establish the nature of the content expressed, capturing the occurrences, situations, and understanding (Roberts, 2004). Rich forms of collaboration can result from the interaction with mentee context (Sarjakoski and Nivala, 2005), and the adaptation of mentor tacit knowledge entails a "gradual development process from the initial experience of the unfamiliar to an acceptable situational fit" (Gill, 2007, p. 178). As learning can result in a "permanent or lasting change in knowledge, skill or attitude" (Griffiths and Campbell, 2009, p. 20), this study is interested in whether mentors integrate their learning from mentorship relationships into other circumstances.

Scholars who follow the interpretive approach are concerned with the formation of inferences regarding a phenomenon. Interpretations are made as they "adopt sensemaking approaches often focused on schemes, cognitive frames or mental modes". Internal frames of reference held by participants guide their understanding and inferences as researchers compare actions and experiences from scripts or frames of reference (Putnam and Banghart, 2017, p. 3). The fundamental intention of informal learning is to discover the meaning of experience (Watkins and Marsick, 1992), which is unavoidably subjective as it is determined by an individual's context (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). Interpretive scholars therefore focus on the diverse intersubjective meanings, their interdependencies and alignment.

One criticism of the interpretivist approach is that by focusing on the subjective stance, it underestimates any structure in the external world other than that of individual cognitions (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). Interpretivist understanding of the social world is said to be prejudiced and ever changing; however, it does not imply that the interpretations of scholars using this approach are "arbitrary and distortive" but a necessary recollection of interpreted meanings of their daily activities (Chowdbury, 2014, p. 6). A review of the difference between interpretivist and positivist qualitative work lies in the type of questions asked and the conclusions drawn. With minimal regard for subjectivism and the individual, the positivistic approach involves focusing on facts or causes of social phenomena, trading off logical reasoning to ensure "precision, objectivity and rigour" for "hunches, experience and intuition" in conducting

empirical studies (Hussey and Hussey 1997, p. 52). While both approaches can contribute to principles and/or relationships, interpretive studies illustrate the general patterns in practice, whereas positivists illustrate general patterns (Lin, 1998). Although the positivist approach has produced recognised knowledge, there is room to balance it with an approach that is comparable and interpretivist (Anderson *et al.,* 2008, Mingers 2006).

Mentorship has been studied through an interpretivist lens. Mubuuke *et al's.*, (2020, p. 9) exploratory interpretivist study on mentoring at a sub-Saharan African medical school is a useful example of a similar philosophy and methodology. Their aim was to gather insightful descriptions through qualitative semi-structured interviews of the "knowledge, attitudes and practices of faculty mentors in a human resource constrained institution". Another example is Laukhuf and Malone's (2015) study, which highlighted the "mentoring experiences helpful in the personal development and business growth of mentored women". In so doing, they expanded mentoring theory by stressing the development of "stronger transformational leadership competencies" that resulted from business mentoring.

Various mentoring studies have used an interpretive approach to grasp the impact of mentoring on organisational mentors. They used in-depth interviews to examine mentor motivations and self-reflection in the workplace. Schutte and Waal's (2022) interpretive approach focused on "black managers' lived experiences of mentoring". Gagliardo's (2020) interpretive study which focused on the "transition experience and mentorship from the battlefield to the boardroom" involved interviewing eight senior executives who transitioned to military roles and their mentoring experiences. Whereas Annan, Do and MacLeod (2023) focused on "learning by doing" in an interpretive study in the medical field within a medical school, finding a link between physician competence and student leadership.

Fundamental to this study's selection of the interpretivist paradigm are two distinct factors, that is, meanings and interpretations. Meanings in an interpretivist approach "refer to how actors make sense of their experiences or reach understandings. While these approaches focus on actors' subjective accounts, scholars concentrate on how these accounts come together, align in particular ways, and become collective

inferences" (Putnum and Banghart, 2017, p. 2). Interpretations refer to the process of making sense or forming of their experience of the phenomena (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). The principles of this paradigm align with the aim of this study, to understand the entrepreneurial mentor's mentoring experience and establish the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in new mentorship relationships.

The researcher is also guided by scholars like Moustakas (1994) and Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), and their associations with the interpretivist paradigm. They highlight seven key features of interpretivist study. First, it focuses on the entire mentoring experience for mentors rather than identified parts of mentoring. Second, it shows how the researcher's commitment and interest in the topic influenced the aim and questions. Third, the paradigm allows the researcher to gain in-depth knowledge of individual experiences through interviews. Fourth, it allows the exploration of human experiences through qualitative methodologies. Fifth, the researcher's career expertise is of fundamental value in contributing to the study. Sixth, it differs from the positivist approach, where generalist expectations are considered. And seventh, mentor experience is predominantly integrated, leading to significant findings and insight.

4.5 Induction

This study follows the induction approach, prevalent in interpretive studies where primary research is conducted, and "concepts, themes, and models" are developed by the inductive thinking of the researcher through interpretations of the raw data (Barnes, 2012; Jebreen, 2012, p. 170). Additionally, because the nature of qualitative inquiry is concerned with "exploration, discovery, and inductive logic", this strategy allows for the emergence of significant dimensions without presuppositions from the researcher. Instead, the researcher strives to understand the various interdependencies of the dimensions emerging from the data (Patton, 2014, p. 64). The researcher recognises the essence of the problem and "makes sense of the interview data through analysis", resulting in theory building typically expressed through a conceptual framework. This type of study is specifically focused on the context (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p. 155)

This study inductively elaborates on theory. Additionally, it offers a set of propositions about the unit of analysis of this study. Each proposition, "consists of concepts and specifications of relations between concepts" (p. 34). Not only does a proposition assert the contributing relationship between variables but also the types of relationships (Saunders et al., 2019). Theory-building research, therefore, has the precise role of developing empirical evidence to form propositions (Dul and Hak, 2008). A small sample of subjects - as used in this study - is more fitting in inductive studies than the large number typically used in a deductive approach, which originates in natural science research. (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p. 34–35).

The inductive approach is typically contrasted with the deductive approach (Patton, 2104). Deductive reasoning occurs when the researcher assumes a clear theoretical position to be examined through data collection (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 51) and deduces a hypothesis and/or hypotheses of relationships from various variables that are then subjected to empirical scrutiny, it refers to the extrapolation of the implications of findings for the theory that prompted the research. The findings are "fed back into the stock of theory" and associated with a specific domain of enquiry (Bryman and Bell 2007). According to Karl Popper's criticism of induction, "it is not possible to prove a hypothesis using induction because no amount of evidence assures us that contrary evidence will not be found" (p. 28). This means that observing several phenomena does not allow for generalisation, as the possibility exists that a subsequent subject or participant may be completely different. Popper believed that "science is accomplished by deduction" (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010).

On the other hand, the abductive approach is when data is collected to "explore a phenomenon, identify themes, and explain patterns" (p. 145). The aim would be to produce a new theory or adapt an existing theory which is subsequently tested through supplementary data collection. There is a sense of finality that comes with the abductive approach. While a less inflexible approach may unravel alternative explanations, this research is designed to develop rather than test a theory using the inductive approach. The study will be data-driven and, therefore, will explore a phenomenon and "develop a theoretical explanation as the data are collected and analysed" (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 51).

4.6 Qualitative research

Qualitative research, the approach selected for this study, has progressed from the "traditional period" in the early twentieth century, through the modernist phase in the 1970s, and the influence of Geertz's (1973) definition of the approach involving interpretations of participant accounts. As recently as the early 2000s, this form of enquiry was being contested for its developmental direction and scrutinised for its value against the natural sciences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, cited in Bryman, 2011, p. 388). Business practitioners continue to recognise the insights provided by qualitative research, which are needed to support costly strategic business decisions. This recognition is based on the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Cooper, Donald R; Schindler, 2011, p. 160–161). All qualitative research involves "an interview whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (Nieuwenhuis, 2015, p. 420)

Context matters in qualitative inquiry as it broadens the meaning of the principal event. "Meaning comes through contexts, and each additional context puts a wider and somewhat different meaning on the event being interpreted" (Gadalla and Cooper, 1978, p. 349), enabling the significance of systems, their dynamics, and functions to be examined. Studying context involves understanding multi-dimensional nuances around the phenomenon; this requires paying attention to both data collection and the reporting of findings (Patton 2014). For qualitative research, it is vital to demonstrate the participant's subjective meaning, actions and context and ensuring they are fairly represented. Therefore this type of research is perceived as making a positive contribution when there is congruence between the viewpoint that informs the study and the methods of inquiry used (Fossey *et al.*, 2002).

Qualitative research has not gone without criticism. Poststructuralists and postmodernists have suggested that a clear view of the personal lives of individuals is not possible. Any observation is "filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, p. 29), leaving no objective observations. Because there is no answer to the question 'why' in qualitative approaches, no single method can offer all accounts of human experience (Denzin

and Lincoln 2008, p. 29). Due to the tacit nature of qualitative research, the pressure to convince readers, the challenge of arguing plausibility and defensibility, and consensus concerning its high quality among scholars remain contentious (Chandra *et al.*, 2019). Often, qualitative research and its subjectivity are criticised for beginning in an open-ended manner and narrowing down gradually towards the research question. It may take the researcher time to justify the avenue chosen as there could be a few possibilities. In contrast, quantitative research is more explicit upfront. Additionally, transparency regarding how the researcher reached their conclusions can be challenging for qualitative studies (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 408–9).

Qualitative research also comes with the challenge of the "relevance of the research to the respondents" (p. 166). Participants who do not view the study as relevant to themselves or their community may not respond authentically but rather give amplified answers. To ensure the study's validity, researchers should ensure that they communicate the benefits to participants, encouraging them to be open, to ensure the study's validity. This often results in participants showing commitment and interest, resulting in more robust outcomes (Easterby-Smith et al. 2011, p. 166). The value of qualitative inquiry is that it enables the researcher to identify unintended consequences and side effects; conducting an in-depth open inquiry into participant experience produces both intended and unintended data (Patton 2014).

4.7 Evaluating mentoring

Many researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate mentoring, with the lists being inexhaustive. A few studies of interest include the following qualitative studies: Kram's (1983; 1985) foundational phases of mentoring; the case studies by Langdon, (2017) on "unravelling routine practice to develop adaptive mentoring"; Kubberoed, and Hagen, (2015, p. 4059) on "mentoring models in entrepreneurship education"; Carroll, and Barnes', (2015) research on opposite-race mentorship in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics field; and Jones's study (2012) of learning outcomes within formal mentoring relationships; Lancaster *et al.*'s (2016) exploratory analysis of mentor attrition; Hargreaves's (2010) study on knowledge construction and personal relationships; and Kennett and

Lomas's (2015) study on making meaning through mentorship. Lejonberg and Chistophersen's, (2019) study focused on school-based mentors' affective commitment to their role, and Orland-Barak and Yinon's (2005) study examined "mentors' professional expertise as revealed through their stories of critical incidents".

Other studies have employed quantitative approaches. They include Lejonberg and Christophersen, (2015) who used hypotheses to determine the role of clarity, self-efficacy, mentor education and mentor experience as antecedents. Mullen and Noe, (1999) examined mentoring information exchange, specifically focusing on mentors seeking information from protėgės. Mentor functions and outcomes were examined by Ragins and Cotton, (1999). Mentor perceptions in graduate schools, sampling professors in colleges and other education departments were studied by Busch, (1985); and Riggs, (2000) examined how training and induction activities impact mentors by measuring their self-efficacy. (Napitupulu and Saiful, 2022) assessed "SME mentoring as a vital role of empowering" (Nate *et al.*, 2022), "fostering entrepreneurship ecosystems through the stimulation of mentoring of new entrepreneurs" and (Hillier *et al.*, 2019) examined the "outcomes of peer-mentoring programmes".

A mixed-method approach was adopted by Mishra, Jain and Chaudhary, (2016) on mentors and their financial rewards models, investigating the viability of financial rewards considering the circumstance of mentors. Lejonberg and Tiplic, (2016) tested hypotheses using data collected from a self-report survey of 146 mentors attending a mentorship programme administered by a university. In their study on strategic mentorship, Hallmon and Tapps (2019) used a recreational agency as the case study. Initially, they used an assessment survey to establish information on recreational agencies and an online survey tool to collect data to acquire organisational demographic information.

To understand the explanations of associated factors in the mentoring relationship, and by focusing on insight in both isolated and direct experiences for the mentor (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003), it is key not only for the researcher to have the skill to undertake the research but also for the topic to have authentic significance and a range of potential outcomes (Rojon and Saunders, 2012). I am a Teaching Fellow

in Entrepreneurship at the University of Strathclyde; I have a Master of Science degree in international business with marketing. I have a higher national diploma in marketing, and I have over 25 years' experience in various industries, including marketing, business development, strategy execution, management consulting, strategic communications, and executive and business coaching. My work experience was gained in large corporations and SMEs up to director level. I also have first-hand experience as an entrepreneur, having started and run three small businesses.

4.8 An exploratory study

Because the challenges in this study were unclear, concepts needed to be developed, priorities established, definitions clarified, and the final research design enhanced. This is the process involved in a typical exploratory study (Blumberg, 2011, p. 150). Researchers and managers tend to give less credit to exploratory studies, despite the value they offer. It is a risky approach to research because advanced knowledge into novel outcomes is not always the outcome. However, it is the "soul of research", without the ambition of bringing a new perspective new insight would halt (Swedberg, 2020, p. 17). The pressure to achieve quick results misleads the business environment leading to other approaches. However, criticism of exploratory studies arise due to the research design's subjectivity, non-representativeness, and often non-systematic nature. Exploratory studies are often justified on the grounds that a novel and sometimes vague area of research requires the researcher to learn more about the management or business dynamic (Cooper and Schindler, 2011, p. 143). When classifying research according to its aim, four options are available: exploratory, descriptive, analytical, and evaluative. Most likely starting with "what" or "how", exploratory questions help a researcher to gain insight into the topic of research (Saunders, et al., 2019).

Compared to exploratory study, descriptive research is more structured, with clearly defined hypotheses. They serve a variety of research objectives, including "characteristics linked to a population, estimates of the propositions of a population that have these characters, and discovery of associations among different variables" (p. 174). Exploratory studies are associated with understanding and clarifying an issue; qualitative data collection is correlated with exploratory research due to its mode

of enquiry, flexibility, and adaptability to change (p. 175). An analytical or evaluative approach may seem like the obvious choice for this study. However, the aim of evaluative research is to establish how well something works; it encourages the assessment of performance, which is not the aim of this study. The objective of conducting this study is to discover and gain insight into possibilities rather than being deterministic in analysing how well a variable works against another (Saunders *et al.*, (2016)

In an exploratory study, the research determines the applicable theories and concepts or whether new theories should be developed. Typically, this type of research encourages the collection of a varied range of data and rarely delivers definite results but instead recommends avenues for future research (Hussey and Hussey 1997, p. 10). Saunders *et al.*, (2016, p. 175) view exploratory studies as having an advantage over other designs because of their adaptability to change. A researcher should be willing to shift direction as new data emerges and new insights appear. Exploratory studies commence from a broad perspective and tend to narrow down as the research advances.

4.9   Reflexivity

"All qualitative research is contextual" and reflects the complexities of the study conducted by the researcher and the participants in each situation. Reflexivity, according to Saunders *et al.,* (2016, p. 13), is "thinking about and interpreting your role as the researcher, and how the objective of the research influences this; and acknowledging how the researcher affects both the processes and outcomes of the research". A depiction of context communicates the interconnecting interactions and enhances the credibility of the analysis and findings, highlighting the depth of the study. A minimum requisite in qualitative research is transparency and clarity, giving the reader an adequate sense of the experience bar the formal positioning of the researcher (Dodgson, 2019, p. 220).

Researcher reflections: Reflexive practice was vital in this study because I intended to fully capture the personal experiences of the research participants. Engaging with

participants' experiences and their recollections and interpretations was a privilege. Not only did that require a respectful stance, but also an attempt not to draw opinions and judgement from my structure of interpretation. It was important for me to represent these experiences in the most accurate, ethical and considerate manner possible from the study's inception and as I drafted my findings, conclusion, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Being reflexive is recognised and encouraged in qualitative studies, particularly those focusing on business and management. The researcher's experience is valuable in a qualitative study and conveys knowledge, insights and understanding to the reader (Haynes, 2006). Because bias and the imposition of the researcher's values can occur, particularly in qualitative studies, researchers should warn readers of any influence of their experience (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Reflexive practice reveals how the research is shaped and the findings attained. It conveys developmental processes that include a series of encounters (Meyer and Willis, 2019).

The researcher's work experience will need to be considered and reflected upon. To ensure reflexivity, researchers must "consider the self in relation to others as well as their own position vis-à-vis the phenomena" (BarNir, 2011). This study, like most, was open to retrospective bias. In other words, "retrospective reconstructions of past events are particularly likely to be biased when intervening events have modified the meaning of the initial event" (Arora, Haynie and Laurence 2013). The diary was particularly helpful for the researcher to keep a record of the experience of each participant.

Researcher reflection: My initial action was to understand the broad mentorship practice and process principles. Prior to data collection, I outlined semi-structured questions, which my supervisor approved. I conducted test interviews with two participants and realised that adjustments needed to be made, particularly to the flow of the inquiry and the clarity of the line of questioning. This pilot helped to finalise the questions for participants and mentally prepared me for conducting the data collection.

4.10   Data collection

As covered in chapters 2 and 3, the data collected needs to be understood in the context of the participants and the environment; circumstantial information is needed, often referred to as contextualisation. Contextualisation refers to elements such as "time and location, legal, social, political, and economic influences" and business environmental data like the levels of unemployment (Collis and Hussey 2009, p. 143). Researchers in inductive studies aim to find meaning in the data collected and ascertain the social context and perceptions of participants or interviewees. This may mean long and simultaneous data collection and analysis to gain robust insight. It may take months to complete, and researchers need to allocate time and space for such eventualities (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 571). Interpretive studies are predominantly idiographic, meaning they intend to unveil scientific processes. Therefore, a small number of participants is to be expected as the intention is not to generalise but to explore of the meanings the participants associate with their social experiences (Phothongsunan, 2010; Smith, 2019).

Placed firmly in the context of quantitative studies, the cross-sectional approach is typical for surveys or questionnaires sent out to participants at a given time. It is often referred to as a social survey design. Qualitative research can also be conducted using a cross-sectional approach: this is when the researcher adopts semi- or- unstructured interviews with several people at a specific time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). According to Ammar's (2017) study on enterprise systems in relation to management accounting practice, Arnold's (2006) behavioural studies in understanding enterprise systems and their impact, and Lillis and Mundy's (2005) examination of management accounting, the cross-sectional approach to qualitative research bridges contradictory findings and minimises biases.

Cross-sectional studies are often used as part of qualitative research to understand the clinical and personal experience of patients in healthcare settings (Doja *et al.,* 2016; Pokrzywinski *et al.,* 2020). Ideally, qualitative cross-sectional examination is successful in longitudinal research, where recurrent cross-sectional data is required to capture the variation of data with the same participants over a long period of time. Again, in the healthcare sector, this approach is useful in understanding patients'

reactions to a medical intervention. In longitudinal research, it could be a challenge to retain cohorts of participants, which makes it ideal to collect cross-sectional data (Grossoehme and Lipstein, 2016). A cross-sectional approach was adopted for this study with all participants, as it seemed fitting due to time constraints, and the reflective nature of the research questions. All University of Strathclyde research protocol was observed prior to data collection.

Researcher reflection: Data was collected over three months between October 2019 and January 2020, coinciding with the beginning of COVID-19. It was predominantly collected from the experience of 14 entrepreneurial mentors and 12 entrepreneurs through semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was used, and data was mainly collected from two of the three largest commercial cities in South Africa, Johannesburg and Cape Town, with one mentee operating their venture from Durban. Three formal mentorship support programmes supported this study with contact details of their members.

4.10.1 Sampling

Exploring and understanding mentor lived experiences requires an alternate form of research inquiry to statistical techniques. Focusing on the mentor's viewpoint as part of the dyad under study will support the delivery of rich and detailed data to gain further insight into the participants' perspectives (Steckler *et al.*, 1992). When selecting the samples, the fundamental question is, "Do you have the experience that I am looking for?" (Englander, 2012, p. 14). Interviewees are usually selected because of the contribution that their experiences and attitudes will make to the scope of the study and not because their opinions are representative or dominant. Another attribute of participants which is often not discussed is their ability to articulate themselves verbally to provide rich insights into data (Cooper and Schindler 2011, p. 173).

This study used purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method typically used in qualitative research and interpretive studies (Duffy *et al.*, 2004; Cope, 2011; Thomson, Docherty and Duffy, 2017; Nickerson, 2020). Also known as judgmental, selective, and subjective sampling, purposive sampling is based on the

participant's experience (Rai and Thapa, 2015). The researcher adopted this approach to interviewing participants relevant to the research questions, rather than generalising to the entire population (Bryman, 2011). While mentoring occurs in multiple disciplines and can be conducted in a formal or informal environment, this study specifically intended to understand the experience of entrepreneurial mentors in formal mentoring relationships; hence, this study conducted homogenous purposive sampling.

Formal mentorship programmes where participants were invited to take part in the study were based at the University of Stellenbosch Business School's Small Business Academy, a South African government-led entrepreneurship mentoring programme, a nationally funded SME growth accelerator programme, a SME financial lender and mentoring organisation, and a community-based enterprise mentoring challenge. Applicants seeking mentoring owned small-sized businesses that had been operating for between 1-10 years and were part of an administered programme with an application process. Formal mentoring in these programmes is conducted for a fixed timeframe, where the programme oversees the matching of mentors and mentees. A prescribed number of meetings are conducted at fixed and random frequencies, and expectations of the programme are specific (Bisk, 2002). The University of Stellenbosch programme sourced MBA alumni as mentors with extensive business and/or entrepreneurial experience and seasoned entrepreneurs with industry expertise. Other mentors have varied experience, specified later in this chapter. Most mentors volunteer their time.

Purposive sampling occurs in specific sub-groups where sample members have similar experiences, allowing great depth to be explored (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In summary, the purposive sampling prerequisites adopted in this study of mentors were as follows:

- Reside in South Africa.
- Be part of a formal mentorship programme.
- Have business and/or entrepreneurship experience at a senior level.
- Have mentored entrepreneurs for six months or more.

For mentees, the following purposive sampling was adopted:

- Reside in South Africa.
- Be part of a formal/structured mentorship programme.
- Be an owner manager of an enterprise.
- Have been mentored for six months or more.
- Run an enterprise for six months or more.

While the general boundaries of experience were met by the participants, during interviews, the researcher was open to the data differing from possible assumptions about entrepreneurial mentorship to discover the meanings associated with their experience (Englander, 2012). Participant names were changed to maintain confidentiality. Mentor profiles are included in this chapter to provide context about the participants.

4.10.2 Recruitment of research participants

Contact was made with prospective participants (mentors and mentees) based on the above purposive sampling boundaries. An introduction to the researcher, the research outline and participant consent form with all relevant research details for voluntary participation were sent out to all programmes. Arrangements had been made prior to data collection with two formal mentorship programmes, a government-led national enterprise development programme for access to both mentors and mentees, and a private SME financial lender that includes a mentoring programme.

The national SME growth accelerator programme is funded by the Department of Small Businesses and managed by their development agency SETA. They aim to maximise the growth potential of SMEs by providing grants and mentorship support. They support SMEs by providing access to finance and assistance with productivity and mentorship throughout South Africa, particularly in the main provinces. They have an application process for all SMEs that are interested in taking part in the programme. However, their main purpose is to support black-owned businesses in alignment with the national transformation agenda. Access to prospective participant contact details

(mentees only) was provided for data collection in three main provinces in South Africa: Gauteng, Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal.

The SME financial lender is headquartered in the capital, Johannesburg, with offices across South Africa and elsewhere in Southern Africa. They provide a wide range of financial services including expansion loans to SMEs with viable ventures according to their criteria. They gave the researcher access to prospective South African-based mentors who were invited to participate in the study. These mentors are paid for their services and are on a flexible contract based on a suitable match between their skills, the mentee's needs, and their availability. Because the programme receives completely unexpected requests from mentees, they have a wide pool of mentors with diverse backgrounds, education levels, skills, and experience. Commitment to mentees from the mentors and the frequency of meetings is agreed upon based on the mentor's availability, the mentee's objective, and the financial lender. The response from the first two programmes was not as forthcoming as anticipated, considering the large number of SMEs and mentors involved with both programmes. Although there was some response, it was limited to few members in Johannesburg, Cape Town and one mentee response from Durban. Nonetheless, this was a promising start for data collection.

Once the list of volunteer participants from the first two programmes had been exhausted, the depth and richness of data was yet to be achieved. The researcher deemed it necessary to source more participants. The researcher then approached a Cape Town-based university. They have a small business academy, offering sponsored developmental courses to entrepreneurs with the support of business mentoring from their master's in business administration (MBA) and varied Masters alumni. Their recommended mentorship period is a minimum of 9 months, and the expectation is at least 12 hours between mentee and mentor. Initially dyads can meet face-to-face, after which meetings can be virtual. The expected outcomes from mentors are two-fold; first, to assist entrepreneurs with successfully completing the academic part of the programme; second, to offer entrepreneurial mentoring. All mentors are volunteers with no formal contract with the university. Instead, mentors have an informal developmental agreement with the mentees (entrepreneurs).

4.10.3 Semi-structured interviews

According to (Yanow, 2014, p. 410), while the interviewer guides the trajectory of the interview, "interpretive interviewing bears a family resemblance to a common conversation". Semi-structured interviews were the selected mode of collecting data in this study. They provided the most appropriate way for the researcher to engage with the participants to gain qualitative data. As much as the interviewee may enjoy the experience of expressing themselves, the data produced should be regarded as data creation (Thorpe and Holt 2008, p. 117). Semi-structured interviews are time-consuming and may be logistically and technologically (in terms of recording) challenging. However, the advantage of interviews is the process of open discovery, although confidentiality is essential (Hussey and Hussey 1997, p. 157; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016, p. 391).

Mentors participating in this study were relieved to have a platform to express themselves. All the mentors and mentees from the university were at different stages of their one-year official commitment. Mentors from the financing organisation had on-going mentoring relationships, with multiple mentees at different stages. They answered the interview questions based on reflections of their mentorship experiences. Open discovery was therefore established through probing techniques to induce them to provide additional information. Unlike unstructured interviews, where the researcher encourages the respondent to share their narrative while being mindful of a mental list of relevant themes to cover, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to re-direct the questions to fully explore the topic (Blumberg et al. 2011, p. 265). The objective of qualitative studies is to view the researched area from the perspective of the interviewees and to understand the origins of their perspectives. The key is the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee and obtaining accurate information from the interviewee (Cassell and Symon 2004).

With face-to-face interviews comes the challenge of the researcher's impact on the process, be it "class, race or sex bias", which may affect the depth of the interview (Hussey and Hussey 1997, p. 157). Postmodernists challenge the idea that an interview is an unbiased form of obtaining information as it cannot be separated from society. However, it should be viewed as "an institutionalised practice of knowledge

generation" (p. 120). Because interviewing can be time-consuming, the more concise the questions, the more appropriate it is. Questions should be posed similarly, ensuring that each respondent has a similar understanding of the question. This is also known as stimulus equivalence and requires considerable thought and skill. Electronic interviews are now widely used to collect data. Electronic facilities online and in real-time are used to complement face-to-face interviews, particularly in international research where participants are situated in different parts of the globe (Thorpe and Holt 2008, p. 121).

Semi-structured interviews are useful in an exploratory study, particularly for understanding the reasons for participant decisions, attitudes and opinions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016, p. 394). To achieve the insights required at this level, the researcher must have the skill and sensitivity to understand the participants' views and assist them in exploring their own beliefs (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2011, p. 144). In inductive studies, the researcher must recognise the reflexivity of the subjective "interactions between the researcher and the data, and the researcher and the research participants" (Stokes and Wall 2014, p. 149). As mentioned earlier, there is a risk that interviewers might impose their personal values and beliefs when conducting the interview. It is key to remain as unbiased as possible by asking open-ended questions and ensuring that the interviewee is comfortable (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2011, p. 147).

When conducting interviews, the interviewer needs to have a good level of knowledge of the operating environment of the company or programme to connect with the interviewee. This knowledge demonstrates credibility and encourages the interviewees to be more detailed in their responses. Another essential point is interviewing across cultures and the sensitivities around respecting the boundaries of different cultural beliefs and implications. The word "yes" may have different meaning in two cultures. Cultural differences are not unique to countries but also exist within groups, social classes, and organisations. Therefore, prior knowledge of the interviewee helps the mentor to navigate cultural differences (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 401–2).

Guided by the above literature review, semi-structured interviews were conducted with mentors and mentees. The mentor's perspective is the primary focus of this study; the mentees provided insight into the context of their venture at the start of a new mentorship relationship in support of research sub-question 1. The researcher recorded the data collection experience in a diary. *Table 8* provides an overview of the data collected.

Table 8: Data collection

Participants	Number	Duration of interviews/dialogue
Mentors	14	60–90-minute interviews
Mentees	12	60–90-minute interviews
Researcher experience diary	26 accounts	

All personal details and names of participants have been kept confidential. Mentors have been renamed using pseudonyms, and numbers have replaced mentees. and *Tables 9 and 10* provide profiles of the mentors interviewed. *Table 11* provides profiles of the mentees interviewed.

Table 9: Mentor details

Mentor	Entre-preneur experience	Corporate experience	Gender / Race	Age	Trained mentor	Paid/ volunteer	Has previously been mentored	Coach	Has mentored for +6 months	Location	Formal mentor pro-gramme	Post-graduate	Personal commitment to mentee
1	✓	✓	MRF	45-50	✓	Volunteer	✓	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	1 year
2	✓	✓	WM	55-60	X	Paid	–	-	✓	JHB	✓	–	1 year
3	✓	x	WM	35-40	X	Paid	–	-	✓	CPT	✓	✓	6 months
4	✓	✓	WM	50-55	X	Paid	–	-	✓	CPT	✓	–	6 months
5	✓	✓	WM	45-50	✓	Volunteer	✓	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	Open
6	✓	x	WF	45-50	X	Volunteer	✓	-	✓	JHB	✓	–	Open
7	x	✓	BF	40-45	✓	Volunteer	✓	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	1 year
8	✓	✓	WM	45-50	X	Paid	–	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	18 months
9	✓	✓	MRF	45-50	X	Volunteer	–	✓	✓	JHB	✓	✓	Open
10	✓	✓	MRF	45-50	X	Volunteer	–	✓	✓	JHB	✓	✓	1 year
11	x	✓	WM	35-40	X	Volunteer	✓	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	10 months
12	x	✓	BM	35-40	✓	Volunteer	–	-	✓	JHB	✓	✓	1 year
13	✓	✓	BF	35-40	x	Volunteer	–	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	3 years
14	✓	✓	WF	45-50	✓	Paid	✓	✓	✓	CPT	✓	✓	18 months

KEY:

✓ (Yes); x (No); – (No mention); JHB (Johannesburg); CPT (Cape Town); WM (White Male); WF (White Female); BM (Black Male); BF (Black Female); MRM (Mixed Race Male); MRF (Mixed Race Female)

Table 10: Mentor profiles

Fiona
She is an MBA graduate. She initially worked in the corporate sector with a leading global fast-moving consumer goods firm and one of the big five global accounting firms (13 years). In 2018 she created a consulting firm, assisting small and medium-sized businesses with strategy and financial performance management and planning. She studied for a degree in accounting and completed her articles. She is associated with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants and is an associated general accountant. Her experience is mainly in the finance field, but she has performed various roles within finance such as tax, training financial management, and finance manager. Her roles also included assessing the training needs within the finance department and working in marketing finance. She has also worked in senior financial roles in other southern African markets and Ghana.

Raymond
He started working for a global IT company as a technician and in sales, then started his own business installing school computer networks in about 1985/1986, right at the start of that technology. He employed 32 people. In 1999, his business was bought out by a listed entity. This allowed him the opportunity to build a certain amount of wealth. He bought his first restaurant. He went into the restaurant business because he wanted flexible working time to spend time with his family and do things he enjoyed. For the last 20 years, he has been in the restaurant industry. He has owned four franchises, currently owns one restaurant and is a partner in another. He has been a mentor in the hospitality industry for 13 years. He believes that the future of South Africa is employment. By being involved in mentorship and assisting entrepreneurs, he contributes to employment creation.

Clive
He has 25 years' experience in entrepreneurship, working for himself. Eventually he got to the stage about five or six years ago where he decided to give back what he had learnt to younger people starting their own businesses. He initially started his career studying law when he met his wife. They started a catering business and then an import-export business in decor and accessories. They built that up from retail into wholesale and then eventually with a lot of wholesaling, bought property and went into the accommodation industry at the same time. After they had evolved from wholesale, they sold the South African division and kept the European division of supply manufacturing and then sold the wholesale. He then went into full-time consulting and that evolved into finding funding for clients. He decided to ensure people are set up correctly so that the money they receive is well spent and not just "in and out". This was when he started mentoring small businesses.

Robert
He had a corporate career for about 12 years and started a consulting business in 1996. He has 23 years of consulting experience and has subcontracted to organisations. He has mentored with a small business mentoring organisation and a university for about 15 years. He is also involved with a company that works in enterprise development, including in the construction industry, mostly through supply chain development. His experience entails planning for companies; developing quality systems and processes throughout a company; business development, which involves finding new markets for products, both in South Africa and Europe. His mentoring experience includes leadership training and business analysis. He has developed business diagnostic tools specifically to obtain a snapshot of what is happening in a business. He is a qualified business rescue practitioner, mainly working with businesses that are in difficulty.

Edward
He has 21 years of experience working with a leading global fast-moving consumer goods firm; 17 of these years were spent north of the Limpopo River in Southern, Eastern and Central Africa. His roles have been in marketing and general management. During that time, he worked with many different teams and developed a passion for people. He loves people and studied psychology, politics, and African tribal law. When he finished his career, he found himself in a space where he could choose what he wanted to do. Mentorship offered an opportunity to integrate back into the local South African context. He started mentoring with a university SME mentoring programme and enjoyed learning about the Western Cape and South Africa. He has had a few successes and failures in terms of mentorship relationships. Now he mentors privately with a university programme and a financial mentoring programme/foundation. He does not do mentoring for monetary gain but rather because he has the time and inclination, and it was an excellent opportunity to be involved again in the local economy.

Priscilla
She started a business as a youngster and considers herself fortunate to have been successful through the years, learning from mentors. She felt inspired to pass on everything she learned during her journey to other entrepreneurs and up-and-coming business individuals. She started mentoring through a mentorship challenge, where she pledged hours to mentor. She specialises in the apartment and hotel industry and hospitality. At a very young age, she was fortunate enough to own an apartment. At that time, South Africa had no apartment hotels that did short-term letting (although they were well-known overseas). She saw the gap in the market and created an Apartment Hotel where she started taking bookings for short-term stays. She built an executive suites company exceptionally well, running her suites at a 99% occupancy most of the time. She later joined a partnership and built up the company to the massive executive suites group it is today.

Leona
She works for a renowned marine organisation. As part of her professional development, she asked the company to arrange a management coach for her. As she went through the coaching process, she was asked to join the university mentorship programme as a mentor. At first, she was sceptical because she had not owned a business, but because she had gone through the coaching, she believed she could add a lot of value to the programme. As time passed, she realised that she could add value to somebody's life. Leona's undergraduate degree is in chemical engineering; she later branched into management. She completed her master's in engineering management and studied as a metallurgist. Currently, she manages a production vessel in marine mining, which entails a range of responsibilities. She has had one formal mentor in her career, which did not work out very well as the mentor was too rigid and technical. However, she learnt from the experience and was determined to give her mentees a better experience.

Matthew
He started his career as a teacher. Initially, he thought of getting into teaching because he wanted to do sports full-time. He did this as well as teaching, but only taught for a short while, and then got into running coaching where his aim was helping crews or teams excel. He received his provincial colours for rowing as a coach and manager and then, to pay his bills, he got into the motor business. He was involved in an accident and had a severe injury leading him to study coaching. He experienced challenges in his role in motor vehicle sales and studied for a master's in coaching. He started coaching in a motor vehicle organisation until he joined an international coaching company. He has been coaching and mentoring since 2011.

Catherine
She has been in a management position most of her career where informal mentoring is part of the role. She found it was part of being a good manager, so performance management often led to long-

term mentoring of those who reported to her. She believes that being an advisor has a mentoring component to it in the business world. She studied coaching at university and volunteered to be a mentor and has been mentoring since 2016. She has a master's degree in chemistry and coaching and was completing her MBA at the time of the interview. Catherine has worked in government and has her own consultancy firm in business management. She enjoys using her expertise to guide and walk a journey with entrepreneurs, and she finds it different from coaching. In mentoring, she can advise based on her own experience and expertise.

Margaret
She worked in the corporate sector for most of her career in learning and development and always wanted to do something involving volunteering. She then studied for a master's in management coaching. She knew about the Small Business Academy and felt she had the time and experience as an entrepreneur to offer mentees as a mentor. She believed she could help someone based on her corporate and start-up experience. Her background includes facilitating leadership development programmes and induction programmes for new staff. She has worked in retail, banking, and briefly in government. Facilitation, mentoring, and coaching are her passion.

Michael
He is a qualified coach and became part of a formal mentorship programme attached to a university as a mentor. Michael is also Scrum Master by profession. A Scrum Master works in the IT space and works in agile implementation or the scrum framework, with a development team. The Scrum Master is the person that helps the team remove system-based challenges, plan, and develop into self-managed teams; he also facilitates some of these processes along the way. He was previously a maths teacher and a data analyst.

Brandon
He studied for a master's in economics and started his career with a global funding organisation as a consultant. Previously, he worked for National Treasury. During his time at National Treasury, he received a request from the mentorship challenge, a formal programme organised by volunteers, to be a mentor. He decided to join them and was allocated two mentees initially. He now mentors about 12 mentees in business and career development and others in their tertiary studies.

Nelly
She has been an entrepreneur for the past ten years until she sold her business. She is on sabbatical. Many of the businesses she has worked with as a consultant were in the creative and service industries. She never takes on more than two mentees a year who are outside of her business. She is part of a global ecosystem that develops young individuals, especially young women. The ethos of her business was driving social capital and establishing the next steps for corporate companies in that space.

Abigail
She has been in the motor industry for about 30 years and has an industrial psychology degree. For Nelly, people development has always been an interesting part of working in the motor industry. This is the second largest employer in the country after the mining industry. It is an industry that is particularly poorly managed, especially its salespeople. Nelly currently mentors 17 people in the motor industry who are independent proprietors. In this context, her role as a mentor is to identify where there are gaps and what methodologies and processes could help mentees reposition their thinking and understand the space in which they can to perform better.

Table 11: Mentee details

Mentee	Entrepreneur	Programme	Founder	No. of months mentored	Paired by…	Post-grad	Type of venture	No. of years as an entrepreneur
1	✔	✔	✔	6	Mentee	✔	Environmental recycling	2
2	✔	✔	✔	120	Mentee	–	Film animation	10
3	✔	✔	✔	6	Mentee	–	Furniture manufacturer	2
4	✔	✔	✔	12	Mentee	✔	Early childhood development	3
5	✔	✔	✔	24	Mentee	–	Engineering	5
6	✔	✔	✔	6	Mentee	✔	Vending machines	Start-up
7	✔	✔	✔	24	Mentee	✔	Sugar-free beverages	4
8	✔	✔	✔	12	Programme	–	Digital transformation	–
9	✔	✔	✔	9	Programme	✔	Hair extension manufacturer	4
10	✔	✔	✔	24	Programme	✔	High-end unit manufacturer	5
11	✔	✔	✔	12	Mentee	✔	Chemical manufacturer	8
12	✔	✔	x	24	Unknown	✔	Chemical manufacturer	10

Researcher reflection: My experience as a professional coach helped when conducting the interviews; coaching requires a significant amount of question-asking and active listening. With the guidance of ethics recommendations, 60–90-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted in person, a public space or telephonically. My perception and experience with some mentees when I introduced myself and shared that I was studying in the UK was of slight apprehension until they realised that I was South African. This experience reminded me of the importance of communication, and connection, for creating an environment where participants feel comfortable discussing their experiences openly.

The interview experience with mentors was the opposite. They were more forthcoming and engaging than mentees. My perception was that they were relieved to be able to discuss their experiences. They engaged in-depth, with ease and comfort. My experience of each participant was documented in a diary. After the 26 interviews (with six mentor-mentee matches), the content of the data from participants had become repetitive, giving me the confidence to stop collecting new data and begin the full analysis process.

4.11 Data analysis

The analysis occurred during and after data collection, helping to shape emergent codes. The process of analysing data can be extensive; it is best that analysis begins as soon as the data is collected. When comparing qualitative and quantitative data analysis, fewer accepted guidelines and regulations are associated with qualitative data analysis (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 571). The distinct nature of interpretive data analysis is gaining insight into the content and intricacies of the connotations. What it requires is for the researcher to engage in the dual enactment of engagement and interpretation of meanings which sheds light on the cognitive and social experiences found in the transcriptions (Larkin, Flowers and Smith, 2021).

Miles et al. (1994) suggest three in analysing qualitative data, namely: "data reduction, data display, and the drawing of conclusions" (p. 370). Data reduction involves

selecting, coding, and classifying the data. Data display refers to presenting data in quotes, a matrix, graphs, or charts that may help the researcher and the reader evaluate the data and draw conclusions. Lastly, data coding is the "analytic process through which qualitative data gathered are reduced, rearranged and integrated to form theory" (p. 372). Coding concurrently with data reduction and data display helps develop thoughts on the chosen manner of display, including drawing some initial conclusions. The initial conclusions may "feed back into how the raw data are coded, categorised and displayed" (Sekaran and Bougie 2010, p. 371).

Researcher reflection: At the start of this study, the intention was to use digital coding and thematic generation through the NVIVO programme. Nevertheless, due to the idiosyncratic nature of South African communication, I chose to analyse the data manually. This way I could stay close to the data, interpreting South African innuendos that could be missed by digital analysis. I believe that the selection of this route supported the development of more accurate themes.

According to Saunders (2009), each approach, whether initially deductive or inductive, allows the researcher to "outline a number of analytical strategies". There are four main categories within the strategies:

- Understanding the characteristics of language
- Discovering regularities
- Comprehending the meaning of the text or action
- Reflection

4.11.1 Managing qualitative data

Field data in the form of words and texts drawn from interviews should be carefully managed through a strategy. Managing qualitative data is fundamental because of the collaborative means of collecting and analysing the data. Prior to collecting data, the researcher should have a data management plan as it is possible that the data collection process could change as the study evolves. Early decisions regarding managing the data will have positive consequences on the study at a later stage,

particularly in terms of dealing with a large amount of information collected and the criteria used in selecting relevant and irrelevant data (Hair *et al.,* 2007, p. 291). A data management plan was completed and approved for this study by the Ethics committee prior to data collection.

4.11.2 Data preparation

Based on guidance by Elliott and Timulak, (2005), the initial step of data preparation was to collect the data in recorded form, followed by transcribing the data verbatim. It required separating the researcher's voice and contribution to the conversation from the participants. At this stage, the researcher should peruse all the data to ensure a holistic picture of the phenomenon studied. Initial editing commences, and checks are worthwhile.

Researcher reflection: All collected data was stored in the University of Strathclyde portal according to the data management plan. Transcribing interview data began as interviews were conducted and was an expectedly long exercise. Because South Africa has 11 official languages, understanding accents, the pronunciation of words, and the meanings of phrases was initially challenging, until I familiarised myself with all the variations and could progress. Transcripts were read and edited multiple times to gain insight into the data. This first form of analysis was where the significance of the data began to develop. Reading and editing were helpful with identifying and highlighting repetition or unnecessary information, and with ensuring that vital information was not overlooked.

4.11.3 Interpretive data analysis

Particular attention was placed on understanding the "how" and the "what" of the data in this study. Pronouns, silences, duplications, and areas of emphasis should be observed in interpretive analysis (Cooper, Fleischer and Cotton, 2012). Larkin, Flowers, and Smith (2021, p. 66-76) suggest the following stages to be adopted in interpretive data analysis "Looking for themes, connecting the themes of one case, continuing the analysis with the other cases, translating the themes into narrative accounts". Whereas (Finlay, 2014, p. 122) refers to "seeing afresh, dwelling to

discover meanings by engaging minutiae with the data, explicating – the way meaning can be woven into the descriptions, and finally transforming the writing into engaging language". Guided by the above accounts, and the approach of conducting an inductive study with "qualitative rigour", the researcher applied systematic conceptual and analytical discipline that enabled credible interpretations of the collected data (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 15). The process followed is illustrated in *figure 8.*
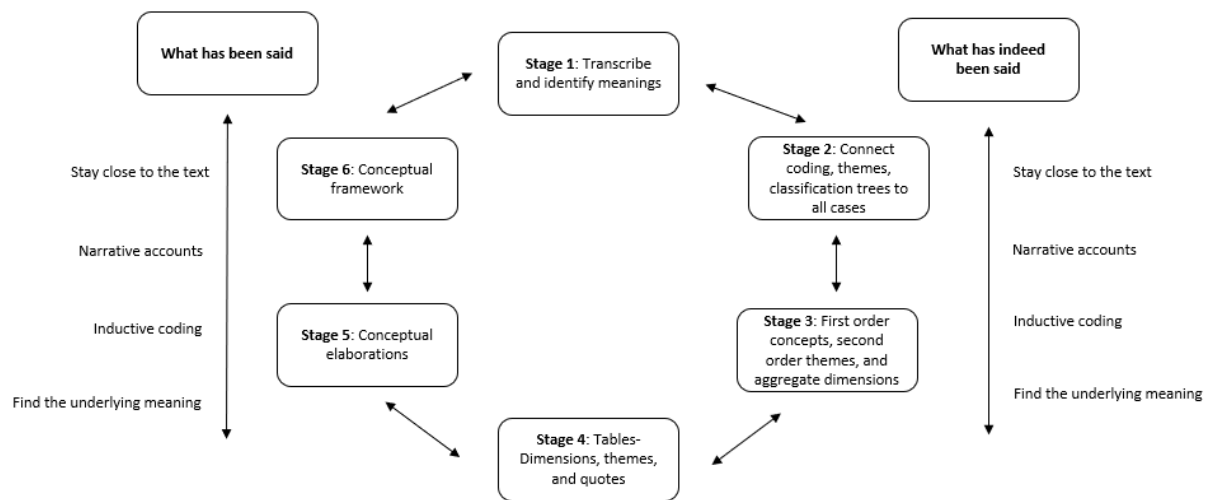
Figure 8: Interpretive data analysis process: modified from Bengtsson (2016, p. 9)

The inductive approach to data analysis initially included open coding to "ground the process study firmly in the phenomena" (Saldaña, 2015; Hampel, Tracey and Weber, 2020, p. 446). Classification trees were used to make sense of the data, guided by Saldaña, (2015). Similar to Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, (2013), attention was paid to maintaining participant expressions, hence the immense number of initial open codes. First-order concepts, second-order themes and aggregate dimensions supported data building to configure it visually. This approach proved helpful in creating a continuum between the progression of raw data to analysis and compelled the researcher to "begin to think about the data theoretically and not just methodologically" (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p. 20).

Hampel, Tracey and Weber's, (2020, p. 449) tables, which included immersions, themes, categories and quotes encouraged a similar structure for this study to establish a holistic view of the advancement of events. Insight into the participants' experiences (mentors and mentees) was examined multiple times. Similar to (Arshed *et al.*, 2021) individual narratives with detailed views were documented, illustrating learning patterns and similarities in participant experiences.

Researcher reflection: I found this manual process time-consuming and laborious but also rewarding and helpful in recalling the interview dynamics and understanding the essence and depth of the discussions. As indicated in the literature, the coding process was continuous back-and-forth. Hampel et al's., (2020) suggestion of tables with themes and categories was particularly helpful in remaining close and true to the data during analysis; the back-and-forth continued with refining the coding. I documented the findings and reviewed related studies. In the process, I was reminded of the rigour required in a study such as this.

4.11.4 Synthesis

The final stage involved "creating an integrated description of the experiences, meanings, and essences by combining the composite textural and composite structural descriptions" (Conklin, 2007, p. 280). Various elements of the data were linked to developing the mentor's experiences. The intention was to incorporate the "real, felt, concrete" (p. 280) experience of mentors to anchor the final interpretation, hence the persistent back-and-forth between the data to establish the common threads to combine and integrate into the final findings.

4.12   Triangulation

Triangulation can be described as the use of multiple sources of data, research methods or researchers to study the same phenomenon. Most researchers triangulate their findings. The combination of triangulation could be between qualitative and quantitative data; however, it could also be multi-methods within the same approach (Collis and Hussey 2009). Triangulation is typically used in positivist studies to verify

"validity/credibility/authenticity or research data analysis and interpretation" (p. 218). This view is challenged by interpretivists who assert that people's experiences are complex and multi-faceted. Therefore the value of interpretivism is more aligned with the depth, scope, intricacy and richness of their study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

In a study on mentor attrition, Lancaster *et al.,* (2016) triangulated by "closely aligning the development of themes to meanings ascribed by the participants". As they analysed their data, tentative themes emerged that were then sampled during the second and third interviews, allowing participants to verify or dispute their initial thoughts, creating a collaboration of knowledge. A multiple source approach was adopted in this study, with semi-structured interviews conducted with entrepreneurial mentors and entrepreneurs. The use of the data varies depending on the flow of the interview (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016, p. 391).

In qualitative research, there are numerous forms of triangulation. Two of them are methodological and source triangulation. Methodological triangulation includes the verification of findings through three different data collection methods: for example, interviews, observations and life histories. The justification for triangulating in this manner is that the strengths of one method could be the weakness of another; therefore, researchers strive to overcome any discrepancies. An alternatively is source triangulation, conducted between several sources across the same study: for example, by interviewing several types of respondents in the same study across different settings, theories, researchers or studies (Willis 2007, p. 219).

Three criteria, which are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research, contribute to the effectiveness of data: reliability (consistency with observations made by different researchers), validity (obtaining complete knowledge and meanings from participants) and generalisability (likelihood of generalising to different settings) (Crowther and Lancaster, 2012).

4.13 Reliability

Data reliability is fundamental for qualitative research and was a significant consideration for the researcher, hence the selected approach to data analysis. For research to be considered reliable, the evidence needs to stand up to scrutiny. In quantitative research, the expectation is that a repeat of the study will produce the same results (Saunders 2016, p. 202). Qualitative research emphasises explaining observations and interpretations and whether they can be understood (Collis and Hussey 2009, p. 64), and transparency of the implications of the raw data (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2011, p. 109). Reliability can be referred to as internal and external. Internal reliability is concerned with maintaining consistency during the research project. Examples include using multiple researchers to collect data and the extent of consensus regarding data analysis. External reliability refers to the repeatability of a study to produce the same results by a different researcher (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 202).

4.14 Validity

The validity of research can be undermined by defective research procedures, insignificant samples to the study, and measurement that is inaccurate or misleading. Quality of measurement is of utmost importance in positivist research for example. The challenge is always the level of validity, that is, when the measure does not relate to the phenomena being studied. Validity in constructionist designs is concerned with establishing whether the research undoubtedly infiltrated the experiences of those being researched and their environment (Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2011, p. 109). While qualitative researchers debate the concept of validity or credibility for such studies, the studies require some qualifying checks. In interpretivist studies, a researcher should "aim to gain full access to the knowledge and meaning of those involved in the phenomena". This encourages high validity (Collis and Hussey 2009, p. 65). Validity in qualitative semi-structured data can be achieved by the inclusion of negative responses, those that vary from the general trend during analysis, including reflexivity concerning the research (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2019). The validity described by Saunders *et al.,* (2019) has been included in this chapter and in the subsequent analysis and findings chapters.

4.15 Generalisability

The researcher conducting this study anticipates that the findings will be transferable and encourage studies in other related disciplines. Transferability is a form of generalisability that a qualitative researcher may prefer to pursue. Sometimes it is referred to as "inferential transferability". This is when a researcher considers implementing a concept from one discipline to another (Smith, 2018). Conversely, generalisation is the degree of confidence in the correctness of a proposition and its applicability to the whole theoretical domain. Collis and Hussey (2009) refer to generalisability as the "application of the research results in cases or situations beyond those examined by the study" (p. 65). Statistical, rather than qualitative research is often associated with generalisation. However, interpretivists may generalise based on different settings. It is essential to provide evidence in support of the results and findings, usually through several similar tests that have the same results (Dul and Hak 2008, p. 47). According to Norman (1970), generalisation is achievable in qualitative studies, whether the study consists of a few cases or a single case study. What is key is encapsulating the interactions and characteristics of the studied phenomena. This requires a profound understanding of the activities and behaviour studied (p. 65–66).

4.16 Ethics

Research ethics relates to the assurance that the way one designs one's study is methodologically robust and morally defensible to all the participants. Broader social norms of behaviour will be influenced by what is morally defensible behaviour. Research ethics queries how we formulate and clarify our research topic; design our research questions; gain access to and collect, process and analyse our data; and how we narrate our research findings (Saunders *et al.,* 2007). Like educational institutions, most major associations for social scientists have ethical standards. Most guidelines encompass everything regarding the research, from the details that need to be communicated to volunteer participants, to how acknowledgement of authors is assigned. Additionally, most universities have several committees that oversee and approve research studies before they begin. As much as the process of receiving

approval for research may be laborious and time-consuming, it is for the benefit of the participants, the researcher and the institution (Willis 2007, p. 312)

This study is guided by the University of Strathclyde's *Code of Ethics* and accompanied by a statement of principles and procedures. The researcher made all efforts to ensure confidentiality and privacy throughout the study, by committing to confidentiality in the consent form, and disguising the names and personal details of the participants. *Figure 9* illustrates ethical considerations made by this study from a modified extract from Saunders *et al.,* (2019, p. 264).

Researcher reflections: I found it particularly useful as a framework to follow, giving structure to the required documentation and ethical considerations during the various stages of the study. The framework below prepared me to begin and proceed with the study.
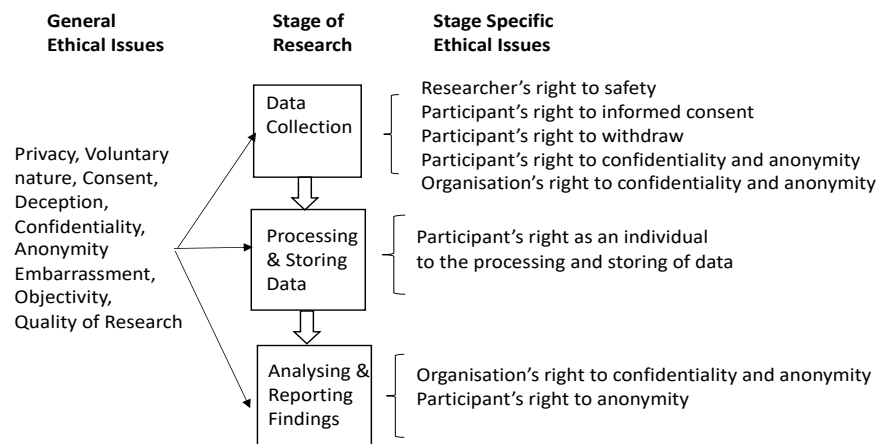
Figure 9: Extract adapted from 'Ethical stages at different levels of research' (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 264)

Researcher reflections: Due to general country security warnings on South Africa examined by the Ethics Committee, it took longer than expected to receive ethical approval to conduct the research. Although I had scheduled appointments with participants, these had to be postponed until ethics approval was granted. Based on the recommendations from the approval, I had to devise a strategy to ensure the safety

of participants and myself during data collection. The lesson learnt in this situation was the future application of situational foresight and scenario planning, particularly when one intends to collect data from one's home country. The notion of safety precautions in a familiar environment may not be at the forefront of one's mind, and only when it is highlighted based on security reports, does one consider safety in a different light. As a result, I arranged for all interviews to take place in public places or by telephone.

4.17 Limitations

The notion of legitimising in scholarly studies remains tied to positivism. Interpretive researchers therefore continue to seek how to validate their efforts and define "good" qualitative research (Angen, 2000; Elliott and Timulak, 2005). While the interpretivist and qualitative approach aligns with this study's research aim, it is not without its limitations and constraints. A gap is apparent in verifying the validity and usefulness in other contexts. Due to the subjective nature of interpretivism, the research outcomes are informed by the researcher's interpretation, beliefs, culture, and structure of interpretation, causing bias (Ochieng, 2009; Pham, 2018).

Self-reported and cross-sectional data has its restrictions. Interviews capture recollections of past events at a specific given time, and to completely capture reflexivity in action requires a longitudinal study which examines developments as they occur instead of solicited recollections. The foundational premise of stage theory is the progression of insight attained through various stages before substantial insight can be attained; also, one cannot ignore the nature of process theories and their unfolding over time (Jurison, 1996; Saunders, 2009; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The "co-existing layers of meaning" (Rubovits-Seitz, 1992, p. 140) or the opacity of language where terms and inferences can mean one thing in one language and something different in another are prevalent in data analysis (Ochien, 2009). The researcher's experience and expectations, assumptions, interests, values, and role are viewed as constraints in qualitative studies. A description of the researcher's personal interest in the study is helpful with establishing transparency (Elliot and Timulak, 2005).

While this study involved mentors experienced above six months, there are other opportunities to explore and reflect the experiences of other demographic delineations so that the model developed extends to other dimensions. For example, with seasoned and experience mentors, new mentor experiences, gender, race, ethnicity, age, geographical location etc.

4.18 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the research strategy and how it was executed to address the research questions. Philosophical foundations and justifications of the interpretivist approach adopted were highlighted, and the choice to conduct an exploratory qualitative study and design was explained. The approach to purposive data collection details was shown, and the participants' engagement within the boundaries of the research protocol were shared. The method of analysis and justifications for the method was disclosed, including the general research protocol observed. Interpretivist studies come with limitations; these were discussed in this chapter. This chapter also included reflections by the researcher at specified intervals. The following three chapters will cover the thematic analysis and findings process undertaken to address the research questions.

5. MENTOR RESPONSE TO NEW CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE GAPS

5.1 Introduction

Three successive thematic analysis and findings chapters (5,6 and 7) address each research sub-question and inform the overall research question and aim. Drawing from the inductive qualitative strategy and principles (Hampel, Tracey and Weber, 2020) and aligned with the distinction of the empirical world, the researcher endeavours to replicate in a "rich and detailed fashion, the experiences, thoughts and languages" of the research participants. The intention is to reflect the unaffected sequence of the analysis and demonstrate the interconnectedness of each interaction (Denzin, 1971, p. 168), including "events, choices and activities ordered over time" (Langley, 1999, p. 692). These chapters begin by examining the themes that emerge from the data presented in several inductive forms, qualitative descriptions (Nieuwenhuis, 2015); inductive analysis structures similar to Gioia *et al's*., (2012) first-order quotes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions; and supplementary data tables based on a sample of respondent quotations (Hempel, Tracey, and Weber, 2020).

This first of three thematic analysis and findings chapters addresses the initial research sub-question: *how do entrepreneurial mentors respond to new contextual knowledge gaps in a manner that informs their learning in early interactions with mentees?* There are two key sections of data analysis in this chapter. Through qualitative descriptions, the first section addresses details of entrepreneurial context informed by mentees. The following sections demonstrate how mentors respond to new contextual knowledge gaps in a manner that informs their informal learning. Apart from section 5.2 (mentee context) and one quotation on mentor networks, interview participants were exclusively mentors. Mentee names have been substituted by numbers, and mentors have been renamed with pseudo names for research protocol purposes.

5.2 Mentee context

Entrepreneurs (mentees) share the nature of entrepreneurial context communicated with their mentors in early interaction. This initial section demonstrates how mentors learn from interpreting, understanding, and responding to mentee context, subjective to their situations. It emphasises the significance for mentees in describing this context in-depth for mentor consideration. Three broad themes emerged as contextual factors discussed: 1) venture life-cycle stage, 2) external environment, and 3) skills and professional development.

5.2.1 Venture life-cycle stage

    5.2.1.1 Venture progression

The data indicates how important it was for mentees to discuss the development of their ventures with their mentors in early conversations. Mentees explained how business progression would be based on assessing their development against their goals over a specified period. At an early stage, mentees anticipate mentor feedback and for mentors to understand the successes and challenges experienced in their venture's performance. Below are a few examples of explanations shared by mentees with their mentors relating to their venture's progressive performance and their anticipation of early responses:

> *I need to grow my business to a certain level, and I know where we want to be. I needed to know what I lacked, and maybe they could provide foresight so I can get to the bigger picture of where I want to be. I'm hoping they will build me up and get the foundation strong enough so that I'm ready for it when I'm playing on a bigger playing field or competing with bigger or larger competitors. I'm hoping they will show me the best scenario or point out how I get there – what am I lacking? That's always my first thing to them.* (Mentee 10)

> *Our goals changed a few times. I was hoping to grow the business to improve sales, stay profitable, quote correctly, and not lose money. So, we're looking for someone who can mentor us now.* (Mentee 5)

Before, the business would be in a position to actually pay me what I need to be able to get by every month. So, what we were looking at in particular, was how we could bring a consulting aspect, so perhaps we could diversify. Or looking at the business development space and getting to know the consulting space as well. (Mentee 1)

Mentees stated that they would explain the processes they had undertaken to their mentors, particularly the strategy used to determine how they deliver their products or services to their target customers to achieve their goals and accelerate their growth. In doing so, they hoped for insight and guidance from their mentors, as shown in the following comment by a mentee.

Assessing from where things started, where do they see things going right or not going right? Perhaps they could see what it is that they think can be done to try and short-circuit the whole process so that it can become more streamlined. (Mentee 3)

We are looking at them assisting with human resources systems and processes, the mechanics of fundraising, penetration of different markets, or brainstorming around the development of the product itself, how to price accurately and fairly. (Mentee 1)

5.2.1.2 Venture sustainability

Sustaining the growth of the mentee ventures involved conversations concerned with financial standing, gaps, and projections for withstanding different pressures. Mentees' plans for scaling their businesses and possible actions to achieve this were central to their dialogue. Several mentees mentioned that their measure of success would be whether they can sustain their business for personal, community and innovative purposes. For instance, a respondent relayed that being able to pay staff from the business rather than from their personal finances and breaking even would indicate venture sustainability.

Mentee 1 mentioned how their life had abruptly changed course, and how they found themselves without income, making financial sustainability vital for supporting their family and employees. They spoke about aspiring to create a business for the long term and leave a legacy for their children. Growth, steady profit margins and a healthy number of clients were significant to them. In a distressed tone, Mentee 5 agreed with this, as shown by the following comment.

Success is profit. This is not a hobby; it's a business. There is no business without profit. Employment is key; everybody needs to be paid. No short time, no letting go of people, making a profit – that pretty much depicts a successful business that is surviving in today's environment. (Mentee 5)

On the other hand, sustainability for Mentee 7 concerns aspects other than monetary gains. They acknowledged that whilst they need profits to be sustainable, what is more important to them is changing the mindset of the community by supporting them in following a healthy lifestyle, which is core to their proposition:

If I can manage to educate and make one person aware and change their views or their lifestyle, then that's success for me because almost every disease is associated with sugar. Yes, we need the profits to be sustainable, even if we're preaching the gospel of a healthy lifestyle. However, unlike other organisations, we're really not profit-driven, even though we need the profit to produce very healthy products which are affordable. If we can achieve that through science, technology, and other means, then I think from a personal and business perspective, we would be in very good standing. (Mentee 7)

Mentee 10, on the other hand, mentioned how their initial goals were financial progression and profit, but their priorities changed as the venture progressed:

Our initial objectives when we started were obvious– to basically gain profit, that is, money. But then later, we realised that you actually need to create a sustainable business. For that to come, our business needs to be able to run smoothly, be profitable and obviously grow over time.

5.2.2 External environment

5.2.2.1 Industry/regulations

Trading conditions in South Africa's economy were mentioned and shared as context. Mentees explained the conditions that affect the progress of their businesses and their approach to the social, economic, and environmental freedoms and constraints encountered. One mentee described market penetration as a challenge. They spoke about the difficulty they experienced with transacting with more prominent clients in the market and how this is a challenge from internal (e.g., venture capability and individual skill) and external (e.g., payment terms) perspectives. Another mentee, whose goal was to move into the retail space, described the challenge of securing customers in the tertiary business environment.

A mentee created their businesses to align with social and government objectives. For them, this translated into supporting the government in delivering economic development plans. The full-time attorney started a venture with the goal to provide access to sanitary towels for women of all income groups, particularly marginalised women who struggle with access. Therefore, as relayed in the passage below, their expectations were for government and mentor support in achieving their goals.

We need to get to a point where sanitary pads are more easily accessible and even where government sponsors them for every woman in the country. So, our objective is to just be that conduit or middleman to ensure that something like that happens. It is imperative for the government to be able to sponsor vending machines so everybody can get access to sanitary towels to make them easily accessible. So, for us, the main objective is to get to that point. (Mentee 6)

Mentees also shared how environmental factors challenged them. For example, Mentee 5 mentioned a period of severe water shortages in Cape Town in 2018 and how this created an unpredictable business environment where there was the risk of continuing to operate without knowing the long-term effects of the crisis on their venture and clients. In a different environmental context, Mentee 1 explained to their

mentor their passion for the environment and how they used alternative livestock protein products to contribute to recycling in the agricultural industry.:

Obviously, each to their own. But, from our perspective, we need to be standing up and doing something for the environment. And what we do is essentially take food away from dining halls, restaurants, food processors and retailers. We collect it, shred it, and then feed it to our worms. After 15 days, we harvest the larvae, and then we sell the worms to local chicken and fish farmers. Currently, we have three full-time employees. Once we move to our commercial facility, that'll go up to a team of 10 to 15. (Mentee 1)

Mentee 8, whose business supports SMEs with digital transformation, described their challenge regarding the government regulation of obtaining broad-based black economic empowerment (B-BBEE) credentials, which are essential for operating and securing specific business opportunities. The B-BBEE scorecard measures progress made by businesses in providing equal opportunities to previously disadvantaged individuals. It serves as a way of recognising the significance of the SME sector in South Africa and supporting the government in achieving its corporate social investment (CSI) and BBBEE goals. While this accreditation opens the door to new opportunities, it does require a significant shift in mentee 8's business model to comply with access to business opportunities.

Mentee 9, while running an unregistered business and hoping to register their venture officially, indicated their aspirations and need for support in creating a franchise for their brand, including expanding their venture to other provinces in the country. They had no prior knowledge of registering a company and creating a franchise.

From an economic perspective, mentees shared how they operated their businesses in unfavourable conditions, mainly referring to the slow economic growth (Mentees 2, 3 and 5) and the effect of the currency exchange rate. This is reflected in Mentee 2's comments below.

I work with marketing companies and know of six that have shut their doors, and a lot of retrenchments are happening; even marketing companies in huge corporates are downsizing massively, and I think part of it is due to the rand/dollar situation. Some of our key corporate South African clients' marketing departments have almost disappeared. It's very tough. We either take [our service] to new markets, which we've done, or we tweak the product somehow to hook in South African clients and not make them feel some extra financial commitment. It's kind of like… tweak that value somehow so that it makes more sense. (Mentee 2)

5.2.2.2 Network and partners

The data revealed how mentees would discuss their dilemmas with their mentors to get support from their networks to develop solid external partnerships. It appeared important for some mentees to be partnered with a mentor who could improve their access to lucrative networks for them to achieve their goals, and progress in either their industry or other areas. Mentee 4, who is building schools for underprivileged children to support early childhood development, spoke about how they needed support to expand their portfolio of schools up to 100. Mentee 2 had the dilemma of planning to scale and secure investment without knowing how to locate genuine investors who would be as invested and passionate about their business as they are. Finding the right mentor was the challenge for the mentee, as shown in the passage below.

It was just the perception that I had at the time where it felt like our business was going to be someone else's case study rather than actually someone genuinely invested in seeing us grow. I think we may have been a couple of years in, and it was at that scaling moment. We just didn't want to make mistakes, and our thoughts were ... let's get someone who has maybe been there and made the mistakes or avoided them and just try to navigate around potential rocky shores. We're looking for people who can plug the gaps (Mentee 2)

Mentee 6 explained how they needed mentor assistance with market penetration at new product development stage. They elaborated on their context as follows:

> *Well, for me, it was the stage where I needed manufacturing and marketing advice because by then, I had committed to the product development stage. I had all the samples ready, but I just needed to manufacture them and then find a way to enter the market. It was at that stage that I got a mentor.* (Mentee 6)

5.2.3 Skills and professional development

5.2.3.1 Leadership

Mentees mentioned the challenge of applying and understanding professional skills like leadership, the process of guiding their teams in specific directions. They spoke about lacking the skill key for managing a productive team and creating a pleasant working environment. Some mentees mentioned their lack of skill in human resources and how they would require support in that area of the business. Mentee 7 related their lack of skill in social interactions and how they preferred a mentor who was strong in communications and psychology to help them understand the mindset of employees and their community. Mentee 9 spoke about their challenge of "standing your ground without hurting anyone". Mentee 3 gave an example by mentioning how they had perceived their employees as unproductive when they were absent from the business premises and were unsure how to address this challenge.

In early conversations, mentees discussed support with drafting and executing their business plan as tasks discussed with their mentors. Mentee 3 relayed how they had a strategy but were unclear on the process of how to implement it, whereas the challenge for Mentees 5 and 6 was that they had no strategy at all. Mentee 5 described their venture as "meandering" and related how they managed to have structure for other stakeholders but struggled with the same structure for themselves. Mentee 6 also shared this lack of strategy and direction below:

> *I really need that push to actually start because, for so long, it was more in the ideation phase where we were just really doing research. We were stuck*

and not thinking any bigger than our situation. We hadn't got to the point where we had a clear strategy. We really need somebody so that we can get on the ground with this and start working on it. (Mentee 6)

5.2.3.2 Career development

Several participants interviewed were part of a university incubator programme that offered entrepreneurial and professional development scholarships with mentoring support. Mentees mentioned their need for support with their current and future studies and contextual issues about their business. Mentee 1 told of how they lacked understanding of the consulting field and would need a mentor who could support them in diversifying and growing their business. Mentee 9 described her development goals as follows:

The first thing, of course, was my assignments. I would also need assistance with my career path, but I don't want to just do business. I want to study part-time next year to become a lawyer. (Mentee 9)

Developing entrepreneurship skills and experience in a particular industry appeared essential for some mentees. They, therefore, looked forward to having a mentor with wisdom gained from experience in the same industry. For Mentee 8, career development skills are best learned from someone who has extensive experience, particularly significant for this mentee was generational business knowledge:

Someone who has had or is running their business with more knowledge than mine is important. I would like to sit with somebody who's got that 3rd, 4th, 5th generational experience. We were never taught how to handle things. It's not [just] about having a business – it's about business skills, it's the small stuff, it's all the stuff that's handed down. Someone who will get the best out of me. (Mentee 8)

Mentee 12 spoke about the need for a mentor who would not judge them for their decision-making skills, someone who could understand the areas they needed leadership development and would assess them in a considerate manner. For Mentee

3, the mentor should be able to "wear my shoes", implying the need to have the space to make mistakes and receive support in identifying areas for improvement.

The following section continues with data analysis from mentor interviews, addressing the first research question. The data reveals (section 5.3) that when mentors were informed of their prospective client's context, they applied a structured or unstructured *mentee capability assessment* to improve their understanding and process the details of mentee context against their existing knowledge. Continued are sections where analysis of data (*figure 10, table 13*) discloses *perceived expected and perception dissonance* (section 5.4), and mentor *proficiency self-assessment* (section 4.5)

Figure 10: Mentee capability assessment and perceived knowledge dissonance

FIRST ORDER CONCEPTS	SECOND ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATE DIMENSIONS
a) Assess individual viewpoint	5.3.1 Relational overview	5.3 Mentee capability assessment
b) Coherence of individually experienced critical factors		
c) Assess venture status	5.3.2 Entrepreneurial acumen	
d) Coherence of venture-critical factors		
e) Share personal experiences	5.3.3 Context clarification	
f) Share related experiences		
g) Acknowledge enterprise expectations	5.4.1 Perceived knowledge expectation	5.4 Perceived knowledge dissonance
h) Acknowledge entrepreneur development expectations		
i) Perceived entrepreneurial requirements	5.4.2 Perceived required knowledge	
j) Perceived entrepreneur development knowledge		

Table 12: Dimension, themes, categories, and quotations: Mentee capability assessment and perceived knowledge dissonance

First-order concepts, second-order themes, aggregate dimensions	Representative quotations

5.3 Aggregate dimension: Mentee capability assessment

5.3.1   Relational overview

a) Assess individual viewpoint

a1) "Understand from a holistic point of view, [by considering] that person's previous experience, where they are in their lives and where they want to go, in the future." (Priscilla)

a2) "Spend time to understand the person, get to know them and understand where they're coming from." (Edward)

a3) "Get to know where these people are at and what they are striving towards." (Leona)

a4) "Very early on, I'm trying to learn as much as I can, so that first I connect with them." (Matthew)

a5) "[My intention is to] see if their views are not completely foreign to mine and are aligned to my value systems." (Catherine)

b) Coherence of individually experienced critical factors

b3) "From a holistic point of view ... my first position is to find out information to understand so that I can help the mentee to help themselves." (Margaret)

b4) "So sometimes we need to find out: Where did these assumptions come from? What are they based on?" (Robert)

b4) "But it's almost like to strip away whatever that person's brand identity and brand architecture has been which they've needed to build." (Abigail)

b5) "By working with the whole person and then with the business, I think we've achieved more than just focusing on the business side." (Michael)

5.3.2   Entrepreneurial acumen

c) Assess venture structures

c1) "I would go through the technical aspects … and the abnormalities would jump out, so I would sit with them and advise on that kind of thing." (Raymond)

c2) "I would go up with a lot of models and things because I'm in the industry of hospitality, and spreadsheets and various items that assist me in mentoring." (Clive)

c3) "Go through an exercise to determine the challenges if they don't know them." (Edward)

c4) "Use a SWOT analysis." (Edward)

c5) "Look at the business plan to see whether it is worth investing in." (Clive)

c6) "I use a particular tool to identify what their habits are." (Abigail)

d) Coherence of venture critical factors

d1) "I have a baseline in terms of [determining whether] the information is correct. And we can draw certain conclusions from that." (Robert)

d2) "I want to make sure that the thing we've picked to fix is the thing that actually needs fixing in the situation." (Matthew)

5.3.3   Context clarification
  e) Share personal contextual
      experiences
 	
  f) Share related contextual
      experiences
	d3) "I would normally go incognito on site to the restaurant environment, and I would sit there and observe how they operate and have a meal." (Raymond).
	d4) "I have a structure, but first of all, I want to connect with them. I approach that situation [mentoring] with humility … very early on, I'm trying to learn as much as I can." (Edward)
	e1) "It's really important sometimes that they hear that you've gone through difficult times." (Raymond)
	e2) "At the same time, you've got to show empathy and compassion because I've been there." (Raymond)
	e3) "I talk to them about my experiences and my failures/" (Raymond)
	f1) "Share my areas of expertise." (Abigail)
	f1) "Share different perspectives from experience." (Robert)

5.4 Aggregate dimension: Perceived knowledge dissonance

5.4.1 Perceived knowledge expectation
  g) Acknowledge enterprise
     expectations
	g1) "Fixing procedural issues, focusing on things that are currently not working as they've stopped growing, are not profitable and struggling with cash" (Matthew)
	g2) "The technical side of the business" (Catherine)
	g3) "Decision-making on investing in assets" (Margaret)
	g4) "Financial support where margins are very tight, and they are always under pressure as systems were collapsing" (Robert)

h) Acknowledge entrepreneur development expectations	h1) "Negotiating skills not only with staff but also with external suppliers and specifically with clients" (Robert) h2) "Companionship on their business journey, general support" (Catherine) h3) "post-partum depression, death of parents that they have not come to terms with, problems that have impacted their businesses" (Nelly).

5.4.2 Perceived required knowledge
  i)Perceived entrepreneurial
    requirements
	i1) "Feel disappointed when you cannot help." (Brandon)
	i2) "I realise that I am going to have to learn, you are never too old to learn something new, and it will be an experience" (Clive)
	i3) "I have negative thoughts because I realise that I cannot satisfy everyone, you realise that you could take them in the wrong direction" (Robert).

j) Perceived entrepreneur development knowledge	j1) "Mentors are sometimes clueless as to what they're supposed to be doing, if you're a coach, you've got to make sure that you don't coach" (Leona) j2) "You have to distinguish between mentoring and coaching, in textbooks, it happens all the time, the distinction is academic, but it doesn't matter to the recipient of the process" (Catherine) j3) "I then realise that I need a leadership course on emotional intelligence and how to control feelings" (Brandon).

5.3 Mentee capability assessment

According to the data, understanding the mentee's background and appreciating their situation is assessed by mentors by conducting a mentee capability assessment. Mentors use familiar structured or unstructured tools (structured tools – e.g., structured questionnaires and spreadsheets, unstructured tools - e.g., asking questions for clarity based on existing knowledge). It gives meaning to, and insight into mentee context communicated in early interactions. The tools were found to be a set of self-formulated measures accumulated over the mentor's business mentoring experience. Examining mentee context based on these tools identifies what mentors do not know and begins to reveal gaps in their contextual knowledge. The mentee capability assessment (analysis above in *figure 8* and *table 13)* conducted by mentors consists of three broad dimensions: relational overview, entrepreneurial acumen, and context clarification.

> *"As a mentor, you need to be organised and structured and have the models and tools you are going to use ready. But you need to work around those in a humane way to recognise what they are trying to achieve".* (Raymond)

5.3.1 Relational overview

This study found that very early on in their interactions with mentees, mentors are establishing whether there are possibilities of relating to their clients. Mentors begin by assessing how their mentees relate to their business situations and to each other as a possible dyad. The data suggests that at this early stage, encouraging and reassuring engagement with the mentee is essential for mentors, creating a positive environment to set the foundation for the possible dyadic relationship. These early connections are said to contribute to the success of subsequent interactions and engagement as they progress the relationship.

Mentor intention is to determine the entrepreneur's personality and characteristics, knowledge, priorities, and the goals they are striving towards. Seeking to understand their mentee's viewpoint was established in the data. According to one mentor, they understand the entrepreneur's situational perspective to determine the existence of

"quick wins" instead of thinking about the more complex challenges that may take longer to overcome.

Mentor understanding of these "quick wins" builds the mentee's confidence in their ability to mentor. Margaret affirmed this by stating that her first thoughts are to understand the individual and their business, which would equip her to empower the entrepreneur to solve their problems. She mentioned that her "first position is always to gain an understanding. That is, understand whether I can help the mentee help themselves". She is mindful of the collaborative component of mentoring as she contemplates her first steps. Priscilla concurred by stating that she intends to approach mentoring initially "from a holistic point of view":

> *[by considering] that person's previous experience, where they are in their lives, where they want to go in the future. Everybody has their own identity and individuality. It's about being the best authentic version of yourself, not competing with everybody else in the world, but competing with yourself.*
> (Priscilla)

According to the mentors, one of their primary roles in gaining insight into the connection is to be attentive, acting as a sounding-board and listening as much as possible. In-so-doing, they connect with the entrepreneur and their challenges. They also intend to create an environment for entrepreneurs to understand their challenges. That way, they find that mentees can take responsibility for their actions and decisions. Abigail expressed the importance of being mindful about creating boundaries in the quest to discover their connection by focusing more on the support required and not "crossing the line" while assessing and building a rapport at this stage.

The response below demonstrates a mentor who prepares their approach with genuineness to encourage the mentee and make them feel comfortable to engage. Edward explains how he initially sets aside his formal mentoring structure and approaches the relationship with modesty:

I have a structure, but first of all, I want to connect with them. I approach that situation [mentoring] with humility … very early on, I'm trying to learn as much as I can.

In Matthew's mission to understand the personal viewpoints of his mentee, getting to know the mentee's main areas of concern creates a mutual understanding of both roles but, more specifically, the role of the mentor:

Very early on, I'm trying to learn as much as I can, so first, I connect with them. I want to make sure that the thing we've picked to fix is the thing that actually needs fixing in the situation.

Unpacking the relational dynamic appeared to be an opportunity to assess the mentee's disposition. Mentors stated that it is an opportunity for mutual disclosure, openness and recognising their differences and shared perspectives. Mentors appear to show interest in the entrepreneur by aligning their experiences with them. Mentors were found to consider whether they can contribute to the mentee's development and if there is any potential for a connection between themselves and their mentee. Catherine affirmed this by stating that she creates the connection by gauging whether they have similar perspectives and value systems, she evaluates her experience against the possible challenges.

[My intention is to] see if their views are not completely foreign to mine and are aligned with my value systems. To establish whether my experience will be able to contribute to an improvement in the individual or their business. There is also the dynamic of whether our personalities are compatible. That whole chemistry at the beginning is very important.

The longing to understand the mentee and their perspective remains fundamental for the mentor when they contemplate mentoring. Michael used the phrase "initially speaking to their mind", implying that it is vital to address and understand how the mentee thinks and relates to him and their business before engaging in the mentoring relationship. He believes that engaging with the individual is the starting point, followed by assessing the business. That way, more is achieved as he views the individual and

the business "as one". Michael believes that working with the individual would have a consequential impact on their business. On the other hand, Edward found understanding the mentee's viewpoints the most complex and time-consuming stage of mentoring. He becomes conflicted as to how to approach the mentee as he tries to make sense of whether he should "pick the thing that's going to make the biggest difference now, or stop and find out a bit more about where they're at, or do you just jump in?"

5.3.2 Entrepreneurial acumen

Mentors' preparation continues to entail practical engagements with formal and informal business tools that help them understand and diagnose overall challenges or opportunities related to the mentee's business. The analysis suggests that mentors seek to understand the mentee's approach to entrepreneurship practice using the most effective approach of inquiry, given their level of skill.

To begin by understanding the mentee's approach to entrepreneurial practices, Raymond shared how he uses a standard framework to determine whether the information he receives is accurate, after which he draws certain conclusions. For Raymond has who has 20 years' experience in the restaurant industry, his analysis begins "incognito", with physically visiting the premises of his potential mentee and making observations. This contributes to his informal assessment of disparities based on his perception. He confirms this by explaining his approach:

> *I would normally go incognito to the restaurant; then, I would sit there and have a meal to observe how they operate. They won't know who I am, then the next time I would set up an appointment with the mentee to discuss my observations. [I would observe whether] the owner, that is, the entrepreneur was on site when I was there.* (Raymond)

For Raymond, the next step would be to conduct a more technical assessment of his potential mentee's restaurant using more structured tools developed over the years. Raymond explains his next steps during a formal engagement with the mentee.

I would go up with a lot of models. I have spreadsheets and various items that assist me with mentoring. Then I would go through the technical aspects of the finances. I would also then have an operational understanding of how the business is running or not running.

Robert, Clive, Abigail, and Matthew also use a systematic method to gain insight into the entrepreneurial proficiency of the mentee. Clive stated that he would need to see a business plan to understand viable projections, how they will be achieved, the anticipated timelines, and learn the required expertise. Edward uses a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis tool to assess the areas that need mitigating. Abigail also assesses her clients' context using a structured framework developed over the years; according to her, it helps with making quick and accurate assessments.

Robert related how the initial assessment of the prospective mentee could be a long process; therefore, he too has tools to assist.

This is where the business analysis fits in very well. Instead of going through a long-drawn-out process in terms of analysing what is wrong, I've developed a system so that within an hour, we can complete the diagnosis, get a full picture, and draw up a report. These things are based on metrics and are visible on a dashboard. So, it falls back on the systems and how to possibly implement continuous improvement. By default, this is based on my experience and exposure.

5.3.3 Context clarification

The analysis suggests that mentors clarify their understanding of the mentee's context by using similar examples, related metaphors, and situations. In doing so, mentors were checking whether previous solutions could relate to the context presented to them. They explained that due to the relationship's infancy, it is vital to demonstrate alignment and understand their mentee's experiences. Mentors also shared similar experiences to reassure mentees that they understand the presented context and can

respond appropriately to the challenges faced by the mentee. Raymond described this as a matter of balancing being positive and being empathetic:

> *I talk to them about my experience and my failures. At the same time, you've got to show the empathy and compassion because I've been there.*

The analysis also suggests that mentors believe that showing the mentee that they have had similar experiences, whether positive, negative or both, enhances how the mentee perceives them in the sense that the mentor understands and can connect to their situations. Raymond explained that this approach assures the mentee that the mentor can engage with both challenges and opportunities. As Raymond put it: "It's really important sometimes that they hear that you've gone through difficult times".

Robert related how the "mentee may not see things in the same way; therefore, you point out some scenarios and let them make the decisions themselves". Pamela noted that it is vital to communicate with caution as some scenarios are unrelated; therefore, getting clarity is key. In other words, presenting different scenarios helps mentors clarify their understanding of the mentee's context and assures them that they understand the mentee's situation.

5.4   Perceived knowledge dissonance

Found in the analysis is that mentors experience discomfort caused their perceived knowledge dissonance. This is the recognition of the gap in knowledge. What they have perceived as contextually expected and the knowledge required causes discomfort for some mentors.

5.4.1   Perceived contextual knowledge expectation

Mentors mentioned the perceived responsibility associated with supporting mentees in reaching their objectives, and the risk of misguiding them, which to them has consequences. Edward explained this as follows:

> *I don't move forward unless I understand what the person wants. It's a massive responsibility to take the business forward. If it goes wrong, that*

business goes under. In a depressed and contracting market, it's much more significant for them than for me. I've got to understand what we've got to do, and I cannot get it wrong.

The data showed that mentors reiterated that they "don't know everything" and often would need to admit this to themselves and, at times, be transparent with the mentee. Clarity on their assessment versus what is required causes discomfort (Nelly, Margaret). Matthew mentioned the complexity of the gap by relating that "there are certain conditions that could enhance and others that could retard the situation. It's about commitment and making sure you can maximise the value [you offer]".

5.4.2   Perceived required knowledge

In noticing the disparity in knowledge, Catherine considers the importance of adding value to the mentee concerning the boundaries she has created for herself and the relationship. She mentioned how she is quick to identify her discomfort, when she is not prepared to learn a new area of development presented by the mentee, is unfamiliar or if the context is of no interest to her. Instead, Catherine prefers to focus on areas she knows well or is curious about, avoiding situations or mentee contexts that cause her discomfort due to contextual knowledge misalignment. Similarly, after understanding the mentee's context, Fiona relayed a time when she contemplated continuing the relationship or passing it on to someone whom she believed could add more value than herself. Leona concurred with Catherine by mentioning that her mentoring is very general and that she finds the lack of connection to the mentee's context "daunting" and doubted her ability to add value to her prospective mentees.

Some mentors interviewed are coaches and are conflicted with their coaching versus mentoring approaches and are often unsure of how to progress in a mentoring situation or the difference between the principles, which creates discomfort. The data reveals that contradictory perceptions of mentee situations can also be a challenge for mentors; the way they view the mentee's situation is sometimes in contrast to their clients; it could be based on their contextual knowledge or a mere surprise in mentee expectation.

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5.5 Proficiency Self-assessment

FIRST ORDER CONCEPTS	SECOND ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATE DIMENSIONS
a) Understand leadership and management situation		
b) Understand financial situation	5.5.1.1 Situational analysis	
c) Understand business systems		5.5.1 Assess required expertise
d) Evaluate external engagement	5.5.1.2 Understand engagement approach	
e) Evaluate internal engagement		
f) Consider accessible associations	5.5.2.1 Consider access to mentor's network	
g) Connect mentees with network		5.5.2 Assess required skill
h) Assess required practice functions	5.5.2.2 Consider relevant requirements	
i) Assess applicable approach		
j) Examine principles of relation		
k) Communicate commitment parameters	5.5.3.1 Negotiate principles of engagement	
l) Assess time commitment		5.5.3 Assess capacity and constraints
m) Manage expectations	5.5.3.2 Define parameters of engagement	
n) Communicate concerns		
o) Examine social bond	5.5.4.1 Evaluate positive affect	
p) Examine connection		5.5.4 Assess affect
q) Communicate lack of interest	5.5.4.2 Evaluate negative affect	

Figure 11: Proficiency self-assessment

5.5.1 Aggregate dimension: Assess required expertise (what the mentor knows)

5.5.1.1 Situational analysis

a) Understand leadership and management situation

a1) "Often it's more of understanding the critical skills like leadership development, support and companionship on their business journey." (Catherine)

a2) "Sometimes it's them saying they've had their employees working for 10 years but they don't know how to help them … sometimes it's about how to reward staff to improve morale. It's how I can assist them in getting all those things in place." (Raymond)

a3) "They need a little support in terms of how to negotiate, not only with staff from the floor but suppliers and specifically with clients." (Robert)

a4) "They have great ideas. They just don't know how to implement them; they don't know where to get the guidance." (Priscilla)

a5) "I am a reasonably analytical person, I like to understand the business performance, the business strategy. I often ask my mentees to bring their financials, business plan and their results." (Edward)

a6) "It's not about your cleverness. It's about your ability to see things a little clearer because you've got some clarity of distance from it [the business]. You've got experience, sure. So, you can see something's coming on. Your objectivity is the fact that you're not there every day. So, you'll see things they don't see." (Matthew)

b) Understand financial situation

b1) "I need to understand what the financials look like, how they're broken down and what they add up to, and what kind of profit they want to generate." (Michael)

b2) "It's looking at the numbers and trying to make sense of them. To understand why there is a need for them to look that way and then do forecasting and budgeting. Also, to understand what the difference is compared to their actions." (Fiona)

b3) "The most obvious would be if you look at the bottom line of the business and the financials with regards to the turnovers actually increasing and improving over a period of time." (Clive)

b4) "Funding is something that comes onto the table at the start." (Edward)

c) Understand business systems

c1) "You look at the systems and what the systems are telling you and why certain systems were collapsing." (Robert)

c2) "They're usually in trouble or need a system. They ask how they could get their business to grow. How to structure it properly? So generally, you're walking into an environment where there's a request ready." (Raymond)

c3) "It took a while to get to that point, but what they needed was some practical application of running a business." (Edward)

5.5.1.2 *Understand engagement approach*

d) Evaluate external engagement

d1) "Make sure whomever they buy from is actually legitimate … they are trusting people they've never met." (Leona)

	d2) "Data is very important. So, we have to figure out if the system is not working, why is it not working … going into a supply chain and relationships with suppliers, etc." (Robert)
e) Evaluate internal engagement	e1) "I need to see the business plan or module or concept so that I can have a look and see whether they've got something which is worth investing in. I'm going to take it from the perspective of finding an equity partner." (Clive)
	e2) "[They ask] How do I reward staff, how do I, you know, just make myself a lot happier, improve morale? Fortunately, I've built up a network over the years, but I'm not a broker at all." (Raymond)

5.5.2 Aggregate dimension: Assess required skill (what the mentor must do)

5.5.2.1 Consider access to mentor's network	
f) consider accessible associations	f1) "How does that business have access to a network of clients, customers, advocates, champions?" (Nelly)
	f2) "How do I get them to understand how they position themselves in whatever ecosystem they're in?" (Nelly)
	f3) "Often the request is access to networks." (Edward)
g) Connect mentees with network	g1) "Can I help to direct them in the right direction, and if I can, I do have connections to open doors." (Fiona)
	g2) "Can I open doors for them?" (Abigail)
5.5.2.2 Consider relevant requirements	
h) Assess required practice functions	h1) "Help them unpack the reason for their challenge. I am not going to make decisions for them, it's about steering them in the right direction." (Fiona)
	h2) "So I just believe that you if you listen, you learn from the person and then you can advise correctly." (Raymond)
	h3) "Because you've got to just sit there and then build confidence with them. Those are the challenges that you've got to deal with." (Raymond).
	h4) "It's always difficult between showing someone how to do things and allowing them to learn for themselves." (Clive)
	h5) "My role as a mentor is to help people by holding up mirrors – mirrors that I've developed over time in my specific background, through my experiences." (Edward)
i) Assess applicable approach	i1) "It is really important to have a structure, to have a process and to know what your ultimate goal is." (Abigail)
	i2) "My goal would just be to help them achieve or establish their business, provided it is within my power, then I would help them achieve it." (Brandon)
	i3) "What knowledge and competence do I need?" (Abigail)

5.5.3 Aggregate dimension: Assess capabilities and constraints

5.5.3.1 Negotiate *principles of engagement*	
j) Examine principles of relation	j1) "Put some ground rules and make sure that we can agree on those. That's the kind of discussion I would have in the first conversations." (Fiona)
	j2) "The most important conversation, initially, is the contracting conversation ... how will we treat each other? With respect, with dignity, honesty, confidentiality, and how we contract, we signed an [legal] agreement on both sides." (Edward)
	j3) "I literally go through my contracts … and also have a conversation about what we are going to discuss and that it will be confidential." (Michael)
k) Communicate commitment parameters	k1) "It's about setting boundaries, not only [in] the first session – it has to be reminded over a period of time that I can only help so far and in certain situations." (Abigail)
	k2) "That contracting part for me is very important for setting boundaries for both of us, building a relationship and saying this is what I can do. This is what I can't do, but I can put you in touch with someone who might be able to help you." (Margaret)
	k3) "You have to set boundaries with them … this is what we discuss, and this is what we cannot discuss. Just making sure we are appropriate in our relationship." (Brandon)
l) Assess time commitments	l1) "I sit down and say, 'Listen, this is what I'm going to give. I'm going to give you so many hours this year." (Edward)
	l2) "I still have a relationship with three previous mentees. Beyond the programme, you continue the relationship with certain individuals." (Edward)
	l3) "It's part of the agreement up front. To a certain extent, it's dependent on whether they see a lot of red flags, then they want contact and they want contact often. Others say that, once or twice a month is good enough for me. And I think technology makes it easier as well." (Edward)
5.5.3.2 *Define parameters of engagement*	
m) Manage expectations	m1) "I really ask them what they are expecting from me." (Brandon)
	m2) "I view it as a partnership. I think the other thing that we spoke about was kind of where the person wants to take their business and then also expectations, what does the mentee expect from me, what do I expect from her?" (Margaret)
	m3) "I literally go through my contracts, to say, this is what you can expect from me; this is what I expect from you, and so that we're on the same page." (Michael)

n) Communicate concerns	n1) "What are the things that now you don't want to work on you don't have to talk about and what is it that I'm not comfortable discussing. One of the things that we ringfenced was politics." (Margaret)
	n2) "First, we need to establish whether we are able to work together." (Catherine)
	n3) "Is there anything on a personal level in terms of self-development that maybe we need to focus on?" (Robert)
	n4) "Do I want to pass this on to someone else?" (Fiona)
	n5) "Why they seem to be … there are some concerns, things like that, and really just listen." (Raymond)

5.5.4 Aggregate dimension: Assess affect

5.5.4.1 Evaluate positive affect

o) Examine social bond	o1) "I always feel that if we don't build a connection, then we won't have a relationship." (Margaret)
	o2) "I was first looking for a business; in my mind was like, Okay, it would be good if I can get a business that's a bit closer to home to what I do". (Leona)
	o3) "First we need to establish whether we are able to work together." (Catherine)
	o4) "It depends on the relationship that you agree [on] with the client." (Clive)
	o5) "There is the dynamic concerning the compatibility of our personalities." (Catherine)
p) Examine connection	
	p2) "[I would] open up and then with time make them comfortable and then I would then give them a chance to open up, and that has been working for me because most of my mentees are so open with me." (Brandon)
	p2) "Demonstrate a support system." (Abigail)
	p3) "I'm there to listen to what their ideas are." (Raymond)

5.5.4.2 *Evaluate negative affect*

q) Communicate lack of interest	r1) "They say 'I need access to market', then I'll say no, this is something I'm not even interested in working on, then I won't work with that particular person." (Catherine)
	r2) "It depends on what they specialise in." (Priscilla)
	r3) "Inform them that they perhaps need a different advisor, a lawyer, for example, as I am not able to assist." (Robert)

Table 13: Dimensions, themes categories and quotations: Proficiency self-assessment

The analysis demonstrates that as a result of perceived knowledge dissonance mentors proceed to self-assess their proficiency. They assess their 1) required expertise, *what they know*, 2) required skill, *what they must do*, 3) their capability and constraints, *what they can do*, considering the context, their aptitude, and limitations. There is an emotional undertone to the process as they 4) assess their affect. This process is a precursor to them committing to or rejecting the mentoring relationship. In other words, mentors assess how well they relate to the mentee's context and their ability to add value. They also mentioned the need to make an independent decision with regards to progressing with the mentoring relationship. *Figure* 9 and *table 14* illustrates the analysed data.

5.5.1 Assess required expertise - what the mentor knows

The analysis demonstrates that mentors recognise their need for knowledge introspection. Mentors state that they scrutinise their knowledge reserves to determine their relation to the knowledge dissonance, an assessment of where their strengths lie and an observation of their weaknesses concerning the presented context. Mentors mention that the entrepreneur's business environment and motivation determine their perspective of how they perceive themselves interacting with the situation.

> *Where does the mentee want to take their business, because this is what I can do, and this is what I can't do.* (Margaret)

Figure 12: Assess required expertise

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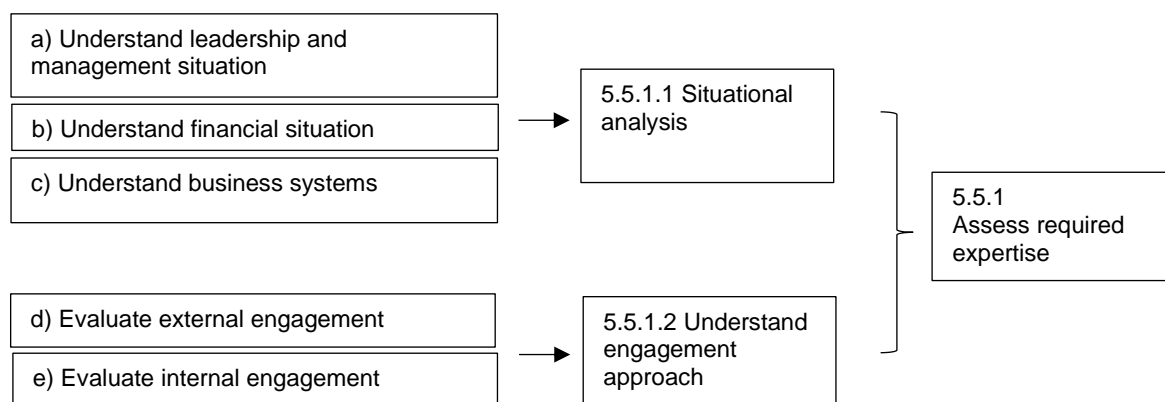
5.5.1.1 Situational analysis

a) Management and leadership

In mentor preparation for their prospective role, understanding the mentee's leadership, management situation and their venture needs against their proficiency appears essential. Mentors mention how important it is for them to assess the context of the mentee's situation against their ability to offer a different perspective on the challenges experienced by the mentee.

> *It's not about your cleverness. It's about assessing your ability to see things a little clearer because you've got some clarity of distance from it [the business]. You've got experience, sure. Your objectivity is the fact that you're not there every day.* (Matthew)

Building a more in-depth familiarity with the mentee's business venture alongside his knowledge is evidenced through Edward's approach to gaining knowledge and understanding of the mentee's perspective of their business. He takes the time to appreciate how the mentee views their enterprise before thinking about what the business needs to survive and what steps need to be taken. He mentions encouraging mentees to "bring him what they have and show him what they see". As an analytical person, Edward prefers to understand the business performance and strategy to establish how he would approach the situation.

This study found that a common approach mentors use in understanding whether they are suitable or have the expertise is asking the mentee to articulate their goals "where they are going". Mentee articulation helps to clarify whether the mentee's goals align with their proficiency. Understanding the mentee's business objectives helps mentors visualise themselves as effective role models, advisers, and value contributors. The analysis also indicates that mentors seek to understand the mentee's character.

Michael attaches importance to first understanding and connecting to the history of the individual and their enterprise, how they see themselves achieving their goals, and how they will measure their success. He also sets out to understand success indicators. Michael mentioned challenging his knowledge by assisting mentees in

explaining how goals can be achieved. He states that "it also helps the mentee to have a better picture in their mind." Like Michael, Priscilla stated that mentees often have great ideas but lack the knowledge to implement them.

Mentee goals are often not entirely financial. The non-financial goals reflect the entrepreneur's interests and commitments and are a measure of their performance. The mentor's ability to support the mentee in that respect becomes vital. Catherine mentioned that she focuses on understanding the required critical skills like leadership development, support, and companionship. In her preparation to mentor, she intentionally recognises that "goals are determined by the mentees" regardless of her perspective or whether the goals communicated to her are realistic. She reminds herself that her role is to support the mentee in refining their goals to ensure the best chance of achievement, therefore her preparedness to continue in such a role is considered.

Like several other mentors, Abigail appreciates the value of her business analysis tool to establish the leadership and management support the mentee requires. Once she understands the direction the mentee has chosen, she analyses her strengths and weaknesses and benchmarks them against the mentee's goals. She mentioned her preference for an analytical tool rather than an aptitude evaluation because the analysis she has developed, reveals the mentee's traits, and good and bad habits, painting a more vivid picture of who they are and how they will approach challenges. This method guides her on the needed approach to mentor the individual.

For Brandon, when he begins the mentoring dialogue, he assumes that entrepreneurial mentees have similar goals. When he discovers that it may not be the case, he focuses on himself, using language like "within my power" and "if things do not work out" to create boundaries and assure himself that his input would be acceptable.

> *Provided it is within my power, my goal would be just to help them establish their business. Sometimes things do not work out, but at least we know we could give it a try, that's always my goal.*

b) Financial situation

The mentor's ability to assist with mentee finances or recommend a contact within their network is considered at this stage by mentors. They emphasise that they acquire valuable information from assessing the mentee's finances and determining the possible gaps. It appears to be one of the first areas they assess in preparation for mentoring. They mention that even though it is financial support that mentees often need assistance with finance is often a challenging topic. Some mentees are unprepared to reveal their financial situation or are unfamiliar with their financial status. Fiona confirms this and mentions that she seeks to understand the gap between the "actions of the entrepreneur and their financial situation".

When funding is critical for mentees, mentors are said to assess whether they can support their potential clients or provide access to a funding network. However, for one mentor, it was during his self-assessment that his prospective mentee abandoned the relationship. Brandon recalled losing a mentee early in the relationship because he could not offer her funding or access to investors. "Because she discovered that I couldn't get her funding, she decided to pull out of the mentorship program." On another financial aspect, Clive mentioned that he would assess whether mentees could be taught financial management skills and remain level-headed once they generate considerable revenue. He mentions that fast financial gain is often a challenge for small businesses that may not have the wisdom to reinvest in their businesses.

c) Business systems

Mentors suggest the importance of understanding the skill required to support mentee business systems at this stage. They mention that mentees usually do not have adequate systems and need support with appropriately structuring their businesses. According to Raymond, mentors need to know that they are "walking into an environment where there is a ready request" regarding systems. Robert agreed by mentioning that mentee systems are often collapsing and building them up would "require specific knowledge". Edward concurred, stating that mentees need "practical

application to run their businesses", and it appears that sometimes they are unaware of the gaps in their operational system.

Mentors believe that business systems are related to business performance and that there needs to be a structure or plan in place for them to assist mentees.

> *Sometimes you walk in on site, and you realise why it isn't working. You're very surprised that they haven't picked it up ... you ask yourself why they aren't putting the effort into their system controls.* (Raymond)

According to Matthew, understanding business systems also includes understanding the "salient elements" to establish the key players within the operations and the appropriate mentoring input required. His business assessment tool establishes a "two-tier" leadership structure in the enterprise. He identifies the strategic and execution levels of leadership and determines their relationship, "whether they complement each other," and their impact on the business.

5.5.1.2 Assess external engagement approach

In preparing for their role, mentors also seek to understand mentee relationships with key business partners, such as local and overseas suppliers. Mentees might need support from mentors in drawing up business contracts and ensuring they are engaging with authentic partners. Supporting mentees in communicating with prospective stakeholders appears part of the mentor review process. Mentees often ask mentors to coach them on building their confidence to engage with stakeholders and broaden their business network. Brandon mentioned being mindful that mentees often require networking knowledge and skill due to the importance of contacts in business.

It appears that understanding the mentee's supply chain is also beneficial for mentors in assessing their expertise for the prospective mentoring relationship. The types of relationships that mentees have with their suppliers indicate the impact these relationships could have on the mentee's business. Mentors mention that mentees often require support with negotiation skills, for dealing with staff, suppliers, and clients. One area where mentees tend to need guidance is when staff have been

employed for multiple years and are eligible for work benefits. Regarding fair staff dismissals, mentors suggest that mentees often find it challenging to take a reasonable approach. If this is an essential area of need for mentees, it is then vital that mentors have the experience or knowledge to assist.

For Clive, supporting a mentee with key prospective partnerships is about being able to prepare them for gaining funding from an equity partner aligned with his experience. He assesses how he would assist with three-to-five-year projections to establish the feasibility of the mentee's business model. He finds that young entrepreneurs often lack the skills and experience to make the projections and hopes to add value to that scope.

5.5.2   Assess required skill – what the mentor must do
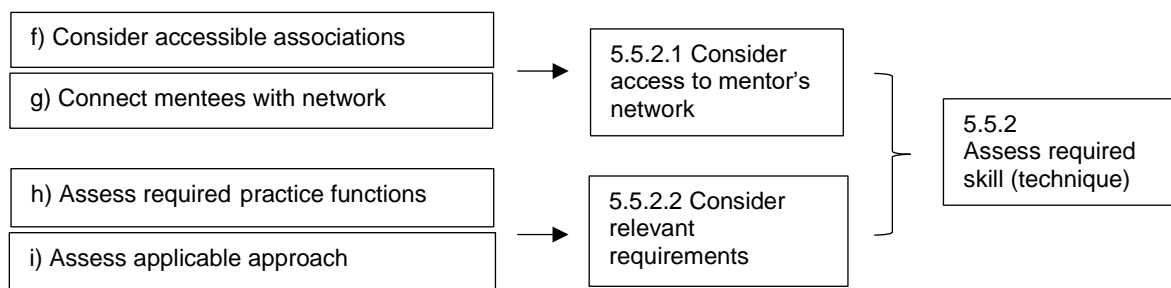
Figure 13: Assess required skill

5.5.2.1   Consider access to the mentor's network

Assessing access to their business network was not prominent in most mentors' initial considerations of what is pertinent in their relationship with their mentee. However, on the few occasions when the mentor's network was mentioned, it was clear that mentors understood the importance of access to a network for their prospective mentee, whether provided by the mentor or leveraged by the mentee. Nelly emphasised the importance of considering how "embedded" the mentee's venture is in their social and economic ecosystem. She assesses the entrepreneur's access to their stakeholders and the state of their relationships. She then considers how she can facilitate the mentee positioning themselves within their ecosystem. Brandon mentioned the benefits of the possibility of empowering mentees by schooling them to

connect to economic and social networks to become "grounded entrepreneurs". Abigail concurred by stating the pertinence of being able to "give them tools to open doors".

On the other hand, when asked about the prerequisites of engaging with a mentor, Mentee 1, a small business in the food recycling business, indicated that he anticipates his potential mentor's strong connectedness to networks as an initial consideration:

[I look for] somebody who's got a network or [is] connected to one … whether it's people who work in your field, or somebody who might be an expert in your field.

5.5.2.2 Consider relevant requirements

Evidence in the data reinforces that mentor self-evaluate to determine the fit between their abilities and the mentee's needs. Nelly contemplates the required mentoring practices to establish her competence and believes the relationship should be mutually beneficial. For her, assessing what is required begins with acknowledging the mentee's skill, followed by her ability to encourage mentees based on their communicated goals and aspirations.

What do you want from me? And what do you bring to me? So, we're going to work together, but in order to get through this, we need to strip their brand identity. Before they focus so much on what they need, can they focus on what they have. (Nelly)

Mentors also think practically and optimistically about their mentee's prospects. They view the challenges experienced by mentees as opportunities for positive change and think about empowering the mentee to assess their businesses and identify the expertise they need.

My expectation or my hope for them is that they learn to be able to think logically enough to do a couple of feasibility studies of their own. They need to have done their homework or be prepared for us to bring in experts that can make three-to-five-year projections to see the feasibility of the business

model or concept. I need to establish how successful this business is going

to be, even if it is at an early stage [of the relationship]. (Clive)

Some mentors consider applying previously worked approaches and those they are comfortable with when contemplating supporting their mentee. Abigail mentions identifying new possibilities, reframing them, and recognising the steps required to achieve them is a process that makes her comfortable in assessing the way forward*:*

Now I'm a huge believer in a growth plan. And I refer to it rather than an

action plan. It is really important to have a structure, to have a process and

to know what their ultimate goal is. (Abigail)

5.5.3 Assess capabilities and constraints – what the mentor can do
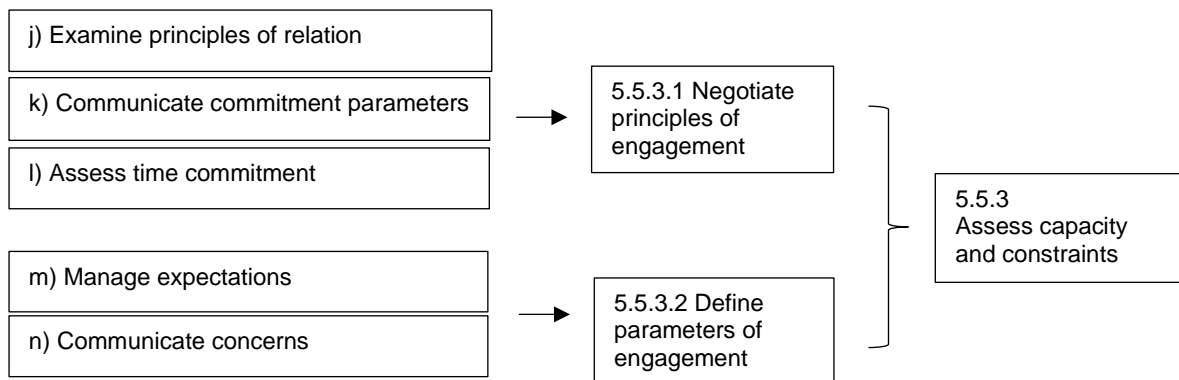
Figure 14: Assess capacity and constraints

5.5.3.1 Negotiate principles of engagement

The analysis found that an essential part of mentors assessing their capability is identifying what the mentoring commitment will entail and whether the commitment required would align with their anticipated effort. Mentors consider negotiation and agreement on principles of action to be key to the prospective mentoring relationship. These principles are based on discussions as the parties attempt to manage the dyadic nature of their relationship. The discussions address the administrative and operational aspects of the relationship. Fiona described the process as "putting down some ground rules and ensuring we agree". Mentors were found to value open

dialogue and formally agreeing on the nature of their interactions it confirms their commitment to the relationship, as demonstrated by the following comments from Edward:

> *The most important conversation, initially, is the contracting conversation ... how will we treat each other? With respect, dignity, honesty, and confidentiality. [To contract] we sign an [legal] agreement on both sides.* (Edward)

Mentors attempt to reduce the risk of inconsistencies and contradictions in how they engage with their mentees by creating "boundaries" around the mentoring relationship. Fiona, like other mentors, mentioned initially establishing the reason "why the entrepreneur has engaged a mentor" and using the mentee's mentorship objectives as a basis for negotiating the terms of their engagement. Alternatively, mentors suggest that they anticipate that mentees have put some thought (correct or otherwise) into why they have engaged a mentor. Catherine expressed herself in the following manner:

> *Usually, the person will have some idea why they need mentoring. It may not be a correct idea and may need modifying in time, but they should have some idea of why they think they do need a mentor.*

Confidentiality of conversations appeared vital to convey to mentees from the onset. Mentors emphasised the importance of assuring their mentees that their conversations would be kept confidential. This was found to help in the initial steps to build trust and create boundaries between mentor and mentee, and key for mentors is the reassurance and response of their mentees. Michael mentioned that he assures mentees that "their discussions will remain private unless the mentee permits him to do otherwise". For Michael, "the trust component [at this stage] is the most important thing". For Brandon, creating acceptable boundaries is about ensuring the mentor and mentee engage in an "appropriate relationship" acceptable to both parties.

It is apparent from the data that in considering their commitment to the partnership, mentors deem it vital to assess and communicate time-related boundaries and requirements. Their assessment of the time they can afford mentees varies according

to their associated programme, commitments, and motivation for accepting the mentoring role. Most mentors interviewed were involved in a mentoring programme where the host organisation establishes the minimum time, should they wish to continue the relationship depends on the mentor and mentee.

Mentors were found to be cautious, reflective, and mindful about committing to the relationship based on the possibilities of mentee requirements and time management. Some mentors mention that in the past, they may have considered a specific timeframe at the start of the relationship and in hindsight, interaction with the mentee was far longer than initially expected or agreed upon. Other respondents mentioned previously agreeing on a timeframe and discovering that due to the level of commitment to the mentee, they would develop personal milestones for supporting mentees with a specific aspect of their business.

Driven by commitment and unattained mentoring goals, mentors would continue the relationship despite the lapsed agreed timeframe. For instance, a mentor mentioned the commitment to organise funding for her mentees as a milestone for ending the mentoring relationship rather than the initially agreed timeframe. On a positive note, Raymond gave an example of an unexpected bond developed from exceeding agreed timeframes, where he credited his seven-year mentoring relationship with a particular mentee to their friendship and trust. It appears that Raymond continued to personally benefit from the relationship, evident from the following account:

> *I mentioned the chicken farmer [one of Raymond's mentees] to you, for example, that's been going on for the last seven years. I may even get involved with him and his business. I don't generally look at getting involved in their businesses, but due to our friendship over the last seven years or so, we built trust in each other, and it might be something that I would look at.*

Several mentors consider an open mentoring relationship with mentees without discussing timeframes. They considered supporting mentees for as long as their skill and expertise are needed.

5.5.3.2 Define parameters of engagement

Engagement parameters are discussed as part of considering mentor capacity for the relationship. Initially, mentors purposely discuss their mentee expectations for the relationship and what they anticipate their mentor will deliver. Mentors expressed that they also communicated their expectations to reach an agreement on their role. Another way that mentors gauge expectations is by asking mentees what they are "attempting to achieve from the mentoring process" (Raymond). They encourage the mentee to specify the areas of focus that they consider important, which is helpful to the mentor in assessing the required parameters.

Mentors also mention that at this stage, they assess whether they can meet the mentee's needs, contributing to their decision to commit to the mentoring role. Catherine relates as follows:

> *[If] they say I need support with access to the market, then I'll say no, this is something I'm not even interested in working on, and then I won't work with that particular person. So, it's looking at what the person's needs are, and what my areas of expertise are, and that what I'm willing to give is possible, without my needing to go out of my way, because I'm not conversant in marketing, marketing is not an area I particularly enjoy, and I can't be forced to be an expert in it either.*

> *It's about being careful, and I'll be honest with you, when I first started, I didn't always make my role clear, and ended up in some sticky situations that I struggled to extract myself out of.* (Abigail)

It is apparent from the data that mentors often respond with caution when engaging with mentees about their priorities. They explain that the caution comes from their experience with previous mentoring relationships. Mentors seem to assess whether there are underpinning challenges apart from those presented by the mentee. Michael explains this in more detail by stating:

If we just focus on the hard stuff, which was, let's say the business … the financials, the marketing plan, the strategy. What I found, for instance, with my mentee, is that on the softer side, he over plans and doesn't immediately go into action. Or he doesn't take the risk … he wants to craft the ideal solution before he actually does something. So, we could have worked on the hard things of his business. But it was quite evident that we couldn't achieve some of those things if we didn't also focus on the softer space.

This study finds that specific conversations of concern are agreed upon by the mentor and the mentee regarding the scope of the mentoring relationship. To proceed with the mentoring relationship, the mentee and mentor must be satisfied with the engagement parameters. According to mentors, both parties take the opportunity to share concerns while defining the parameters. It seems that this information helps mentors decide whether they can assist the mentee and their venture based on their personal values and capabilities. Margaret mentioned that by exploring the prospective mentee's interests and passions, she discovered the mentee's zeal for a particular political party. Margaret felt compelled to raise that as a concern for her and to agree on the subject not being mentioned, should the relationship continue.

Respondents suggested that understanding the mentee's areas of concern led them to review whether they would make a meaningful impact on the entrepreneur and their venture. Mentors assess the entrepreneur's needs and/or objectives against their experience and capabilities. It appears that the discussion of concerns often originates from previous experiences with other mentees, prompting them to have this conversation. They perceive the delivery of advice as a shared process between themselves and the mentee and often third parties who are part of the mentor's network. Catherine explains this point of view as follows:

First, we need to establish whether we can work together because there is a dynamic, such as whether our personalities are compatible, so that I hold the person's best interests at heart. To see if their views are not completely foreign to mine and are aligned to my value systems, that's important … to be able to get an idea. And to establish whether my experience will be able to contribute to an improvement of the individual themselves or their business.

5.5.4 Assess affect
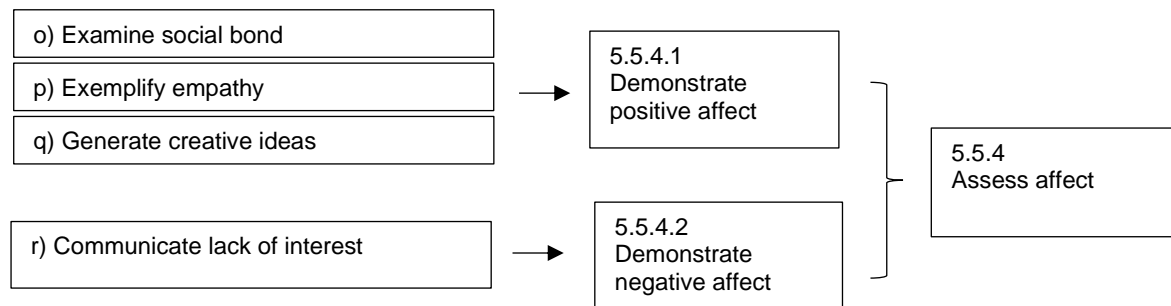
Figure 15: Assess affect

5.5.4.1 Demonstrate positive affect

According to the respondents, the mentor's emotional connectedness with the prospective relationship during this self-assessment process is fundamental in committing. The assessment is based on whether they can relate to the context presented and generate valuable support. A connection could be positive or negative. It could concern the entrepreneur as an individual and/or the business enterprise's challenge or opportunity.

> *I always feel that if we don't build a connection, we don't have a relationship. I need to know where the person wants to take their business.* (Margaret)

> *I've got to first connect with them, to see if I can become that trusted advisor, the person they'll call when they get stuck, then we can see if we can fix behaviour or process.* (Matthew)

Compatibility of personality is important to mentors, Catherine suggests that being "able to work together is important, that whole chemistry at the beginning is very important" it is fundamental to the progression of the mentoring relationship. Clive gave the example of the importance of agreeing on the type of relationship that suits both parties, emphasising that the dynamic would need to be agreeable. Leona is more relaxed working with mentees in the same industry, where she feels she can add value.

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Mentors described the need to create an environment where communication is open, and they can listen and possibly support their prospective mentee. Generating novel ideas and possibilities appears to be the top priority. Priscilla describes creating mental models and tapping into her creativity as she assesses possible support for the mentee: "I start to put together what I think their needs are and what I think would suit them". Matthew described it as a learning experience, stating that when he experiences a connection with the prospective mentee, he is motivated to learn as much as possible.

5.5.4.2   Demonstrate negative affect

At other times the lack of connection, emotional and otherwise leads to the rejection of the relationship. When mentors anticipate that they are not ideal for the role, they may choose not to continue with the relationship (Catherine, Priscilla Robert). Robert relayed how after several conversations, he discovered that the mentee would best need the advice of the different advisor and he went on to reject the relationship

> *I inform them that they perhaps need a different advisor, a lawyer, for example, as I am not able to assist.*

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated the findings on the way mentors respond to new contextual knowledge gaps and specifies how the gaps inform their learning in early interactions with mentees. *Figure 15* below shows how mentees initially recount the nature of their context, and their initial interface with mentors. Subsequently, the analysis reveals how mentors respond, process and gain insight into contextual information by applying formal and informal analysis tools to conduct a capability assessment filtered through the lens of their entrepreneurial experience. Also expressed by mentors, is the recognition of perceived knowledge dissonance which influences them to undertake a proficiency self-assessment, that is, mentors examine their understanding of what they know, must do, and can do to support their prospective mentee. Affect appears to influence the decisions made during the proficiency self-assessment process. Whilst in most instances, mentors commit to the

relationship, there are occasions when rejection is the outcome. The following chapter addresses the second research sub-question.
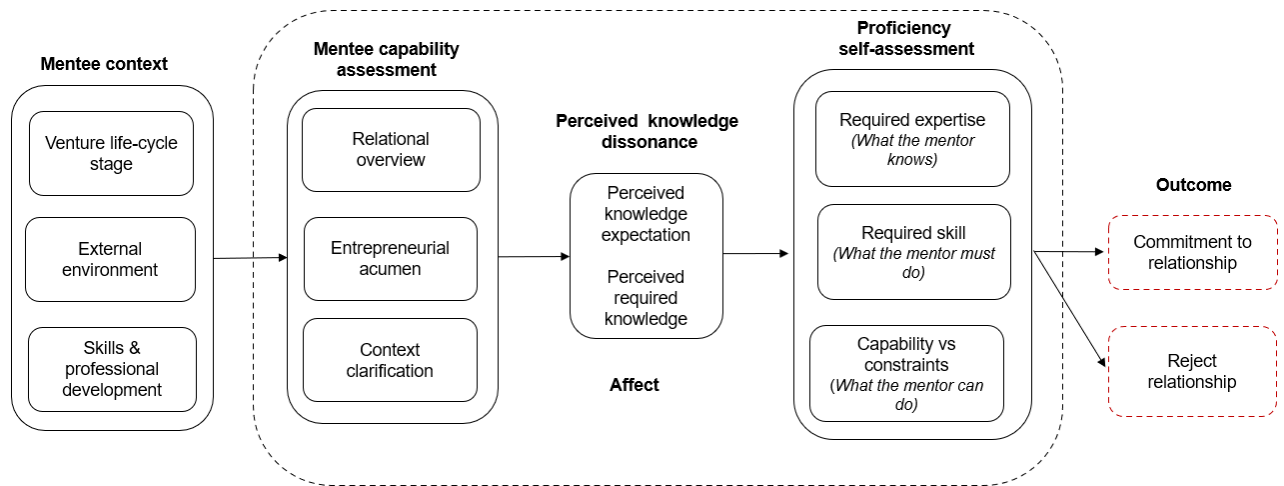
Figure 16: Mentor response to new contextual knowledge gaps

6. LEARNING AND ADAPTING EXISTING ENTREPRENEURIAL KNOWLEDGE WITH NEW CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the themes that emerge from the data that address the second research sub-question: *how do entrepreneurial mentors learn and adapt their existing entrepreneurial knowledge with new contextual knowledge while mentoring?*

This chapter examines the themes that emerge from the data presented in several inductive forms, qualitative descriptions (Nieuwenhuis, 2015); inductive analysis structures similar to Gioia *et al's.,* (2012) first-order quotes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions; and supplementary data tables based on a sample of respondent quotations (Hempel, Tracey, and Weber, 2020).

According to Kram (1983), mentoring literature posits mentorship practice phases as initiating, cultivation, separation, and de-definition. Alternatively, Mole (2021) suggests four stages of the business advice process: attraction, engagement, exit, and extension. Data analysis in this chapter demonstrates the occurrences once the mentor has committed to the relationship, conceptualised as cultivation or engagement phases respectively.

According to the analysis, learning and adaptation of existing knowledge for mentors occurs throughout this phase, and three initial broad themes emerge, 1) supposition formulation, 2) advise and co-create, 3) reflection on knowledge internalisation. Two themes demonstrating trust emerged from the data, consisting of 1) assured capability and 2) demonstrated sincerity. Trust is considered core for the success of this relationship stage. Mentors relay how trust creates confidence in the interaction regardless of immediate results.

Figure 17: Adaptation of knowledge to bridge contextual knowledge gaps

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions

a) Transparency on competencies

b) Explore challenge in context

c) Reframe challenges

→ 6.2.1 Idea generation

d) Recognising the positive

e) Connect solutions to aspirations

→ 6.2.2 Rationalise thought process

6.2 Contextual Supposition formulation

f) Suggest personal management changes

g) Advise on enterprise internal relations

h) Advise on trade/external relations

→ 6.3.1 Advise on relational challenges

i) Co-develop systems & processes

j) Combine solutions on financial challenges

k) Agree on strategic direction

→ 6.3.2 Collaborate on operational effectiveness

6.3 Advise and Co-create

l) Acknowledge shift in confidence

m) Perceive change in mindset

n) Acknowledge achievements

→ 6.4.1 Review impact on entrepreneur

o) Acknowledge new systems and processes

p) Recognise venture progression

q) Accept no effect

→ 6.4.2 Review impact on enterprise

6.4 Reflection on advice internalisation

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐
│ r) Confirm aptitude credibility │        │ 6.5.1 Assure    │
├─────────────────────────────────┤ ──────▶│ capability      │
│ s) Offer genuine guidance       │        │                 │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘ ⎤
                                                               ⎥   ┌──────────────┐
                                                               ⎬   │ 6.5 Trust    │
                                                               ⎥   │              │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐ ⎦   └──────────────┘
│ t) Create a connection          │        │ 6.5.2           │
├─────────────────────────────────┤ ──────▶│ Demonstrate     │
│ u) Prioritise relationship      │        │ sincerity       │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘
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Table 14: Dimensions, themes categories and quotations: Adaptation of knowledge to bridge contextual knowledge gaps

First-order concepts, second-order themes, aggregate dimensions	Representative quotations
6.2 Aggregate dimension: Contextual supposition formulation	
6.2.1 *Demonstrate idea generation* a) Transparency on competencies	a1) "Although some of them may have seen my profile, I will just give some background to what I'm doing and who I am." (Fiona) a2) "I communicate what I can and can't do." (Michael) a3) "I think the mentee sometimes expects you to know or to bring somebody along." (Robert)
b) Explore challenge in the context	b1) "So which of these ideas are we going to focus on first? What challenges are we facing to make sure that this is a successful venture?" (Fiona) b2) "Understanding what the person wants versus what the person needs is the difficult part." (Edward) b3) "Let's go and find out what the factual situation is, what are we trying to achieve with this process?" (Robert) b4) "The only way I can get the person to be radically honest, unlike being in the classroom, is just to keep on asking not even the tough questions but also the basic questions." (Nelly)
c) Reframe challenges	c1) "So I will put something together for that person to suit their needs and to suit them and where they are. Certain things might be applicable to certain people and not to others." (Priscilla) c2) "It typically starts off with me having to look at their financial statements. Sometimes it's the technical side of the business, but often it's more of the critical skills like leadership development which is not necessarily textbook-based." (Catherine) c3) "Making sure that I understand what their needs are so that I understand what I'm supposed to do during our conversations and how to prompt them to think of what the next step would be." (Fiona) c4) "I've got to understand what we've got to do for this mentee, and I cannot get it wrong. My advice has got to be on point. My guidance of the person has got to be on point." (Edward)
6.2.2 Rationalise thought process d) Recognising the positive	d1) "With another mentee that I have, she has ideas and good ideas, but I think she just needs a bit of structure." (Fiona) d2) "Know what your resources are. But also, be upfront about it." (Margaret) d3) "At that moment was when I said to him, 'I don't think I should be mentoring you at all. I don't think you should be on this programme. You are doing the wrong job.' You know, he just said to me, 'You're absolutely right.'" (Edward)

e) Connect solutions to aspirations	e1) "So I will put something together for that person to suit their needs and to suit them and where they are in their lives. It really depends on where you are in your life and on your journey." (Priscilla)
	e2) "So you've got to take them to that space and get them to start seeing what's on the horizon? When we've got that stability, now we could start saying, 'Okay, are we working towards that goal?'" (Matthew)
	e3) "He wants to craft the ideal solution before he actually does something. So, we could have worked on the hard things of his business as an entrepreneur. But it was quite evident that we couldn't achieve some of those things if we didn't also focus on the softer space. And when we started to address some of the softer things, the harder things started to fall into place." (Michael).

6.3 Overarching dimension: Advise and co-create

6.3.1 Knowledge sharing

f) Suggest personal management changes	f1) "She also asked me for help with work-life balance. She was working from home, but she hadn't structured her time." (Margaret)
	f2) "It's always just a few basic steps that you can help them with just to give them that kick-start and putting them into the right direction." (Priscilla)
	f3) "It was about having to find out why the prickliness existed, and once you could deal with that, you could actually then start. She's ended up being one of the stars and is performing in an amazing way." (Abigail)
g) Advise on internal enterprise relations	g1) "SMEs take people on board that are very similar. So, all sets of skills are like our own, and when people are not different from us, we dislike it, and they annoy us. I suggest that if we give them the voice, it is very healthy because they provide this balance and contrast to how we think and act " (Matthew)
	g2) "Often their staff don't have medical aid, and they ask about how I can assist them with rewarding staff and improving morale." (Raymond)
	g3) "HR component depending on the size of the business. The theoretical side of HR." (Clive)
h) Advise on trade/external relations	h1) "She's gone out now and done a bit of PR work and realised that she's actually got a personality which is likeable, and she's picked up another handful of external winemakers for her business." (Clive)
	h2) "They just need a little support in terms of how you negotiate, not only with staff from the floor but suppliers, specifically with clients." (Robert)
	h3) "With contracts, because they buy their products from overseas, the question is how do they make sure that their supplier is legit?" (Leona)
6.3.2 *Collaborate on operational effectiveness* i) Co-develop systems and processes	i1) "Production systems change because clients or groups of clients are different …you go into the market and develop a product for them. I think across the board, that means that I've had to learn and adapt as well, very quickly." (Robert)
	i2) "What you need is a practical application of running a business, right? And it took us a long, long time to get to that point." (Edward)

	i3) "Advice on a decision she needed to make about buying an overlock machine." (Margaret)
j) Combine solutions to financial challenges	j1) "The gearing was totally incorrect, and for the past two years, we've been attempting to put marketing strategies in place. We built a relationship with them and did our best to assist." (Raymond)
	j2) "His personal banker now sits in a weekly meeting with him to track the activities of their accountant. So, they now have a team for the person who administrates the business." (Edward)
	j3) "Normally you look at the financials. So, I track financial data, and if we see it going in the right direction, I'm happy." (Robert)
k) Agree on strategic direction	k1) "I should be mentoring the person that does the planning for the business, who looks into the future and at where you're taking this business next because that's where you're broken." (Edward)
	k2) "I'm busy mentoring an individual who has got a business plan, and I'm helping him to pick up his business actually in KwaZulu-Natal." (Priscilla)
	k3) "We really understand that there needs to be a structure or a plan." (Abigail)

6.4 Overarching dimension: Reflection on advice internalisation

6.4.1 *Review impact on the entrepreneur*	
l) Acknowledge shift in confidence	l1) "So you start seeing them actually being comfortable with others. You start seeing them relax … she was just so bubbly." (Leona)
	l2) "I think she also was willing to kind of experiment more. I think she thinks bigger now." (Margaret)
	l3) "They've managed to adapt in the sense that they have become confident enough to handle situations, whether it's operational or HR or financial, through the systems that I've helped him set up and put in place." (Clive)
m) Perceive shift in mindset	m1) "I can see how it's changed all of her thoughts around how she wants to grow her business. It finally made sense. He saw himself without these rose-tinted sunglasses on, and suddenly his whole demeanour was completely different." (Nelly)
	m2) "She came into the mentoring relationship with the idea that it would be a quick fix, and then while we were talking, there were a few things that they didn't think of when they started the journey. Now she can start seeing those results of putting in the work." (Fiona)
	m3) "When an entrepreneur has got access to some of these resources, how that can change their business idea and the world view of what is possible with their business." (Michael)
n) Acknowledge achievements	n1) "There was no way when we had our initial conversations that we saw at the end of the year he was going to be a Lion's Den finalist … the amount of growth that he's seeing, the self-confidence." (Michael)

n2) "Getting out there and being a little bit more of an extrovert instead of an introvert because of her line of business." (Clive)

n3) "[I said] this is what we can achieve, and as soon as they see that's what they can achieve, then you stop the handle because then they've got the guideline. All they need is a guideline." (Robert)

5.3.2 *Review impact on enterprise*

o) Acknowledge new systems and processes

o1) "Because we did that work, it spilt over into all of the other assignments because the foundation was right, it spilt over onto his financial project." (Michael)

o2) "I've taught them to be independent. Like learning how to research, look for like information like industry compliances." (Brandon)

po3) "Now they structure their response to the problem that was given to them. Hopefully, in the near future, they will be ready to apply for funding." (Fiona)

p) Recognise venture progression

p1) "She's picked up another handful of external winemakers for her business." (Clive)

p2) "Now they have another lady working for them, and production has increased." (Leona)

p3) "That is the amazing thing about mentors – that they see opportunities on behalf of mentees, and they sometimes just push you over the threshold to grab the opportunity." (Michael)

q) Accept no effect

q1) "Something that I say today to a mentee might not have an impact today. But six years from now they may sit back and say, 'Hang on! Now I understand what he meant with risk identification, quantification, and mitigation because I've just lost my *bakkie* [truck]." (Edward)

q2) "You just hope that you've made such a big impact that it will last long for them." (Priscilla)

q3) "They're mentoring, but they're clueless as to what is it that they're supposed to be doing." (Leona)

6.5 Overarching dimension: Trust

6.5.1 *Assure capability*

r) Confirm aptitude credibility

r1) "Mentoring does require a firm hand sometimes, you guide them in terms of where to focus, and that's where the business analysis side of it fits in very well." (Robert)

r2) "Show them that we offer a different point of view and understand their needs, that way, they get to grips with what they want and where they want to go" (Edward)

r3) "We have the ability to observe and see things they do not see" (Matthew)

r4) "We have a conversation about what's happening in their business" (Margaret)

r5) "Build that trust that you have the knowledge to deal with issues, not just from a positive aspect" (Raymond)

s) Offer genuine guidance

s1) "I'm not going to make decisions for them, but just steer them in the right direction" (Fiona)

s2) "Having gone through all of that myself has given me the insight that I needed to pass on all the knowledge and experiences that I've gained to mentees". (Priscilla)

s3) You need to show them you can hold their hand in certain circumstances" (Michael)

6.5.2 Demonstrate sincerity

t) Create a connection

t1) "We should always connect so that we are free to do and say what is important" (Margaret)

t2) "I need to open up and also give them the chance to do the same" (Brandon)

t3) "Trust is the cornerstone and foundation of the relationship" (Michael)

u1) "Assure them that they have a sounding board and support system" (Abigail)

u) Prioritise relationship

u2) "I don't want to create a rigid block around us and approach it as the mentor, rather the issue of being friends. It's very important that they [mentees] relax, as I am somebody they never knew" (Leona)

u3) "I am almost their thermometer gauge and am there to gauge how they are doing" (Abigail)

6.2 Contextual supposition formulation

The analysis found that based on the contextual information presented to mentors regarding mentee challenges and opportunities, they begin to develop suppositions as they process mentee context against existing knowledge and possible forms of approach or development, *figure 18* below. Two themes emerged, 1) demonstrate idea generation, and 2) rationalise thought processes.
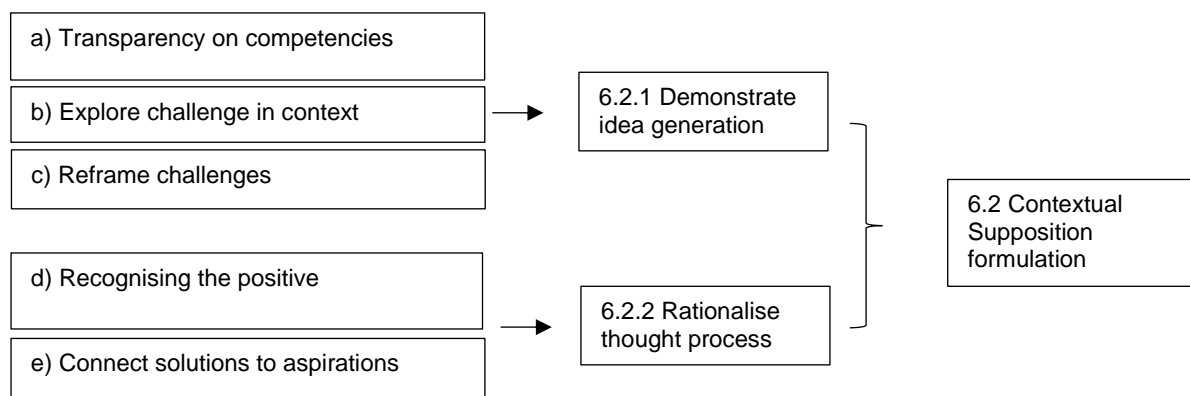
Figure 18: Supposition formulation

6.2.1 Demonstrate idea generation

a) Transparency on competencies

It appears to be essential for mentors to have confidence in their ability and to disclose their astuteness as they begin the mentoring relationship. The disclosure demonstrates mentor competence and transparency of knowledge aligned to mentee context understanding. According to some mentors, the rationale for disclosure is two-fold. Firstly, it indicates their abilities and values, outlining the limits of their experience and beliefs. Secondly, it helps to reduce the gap between mentee expectations and the reality of knowledge exchange within the relationship.

According to mentors, after the mentee has responded to the mentors' competency disclosure, they tend to re-consider whether their skills align with their mentee's requirements. It appears to be the perception of mentors that mentees expect disclosure from their mentor as a form of assurance of transparency and building rapport. Most mentors prioritise the mentee's interests and challenges above their

abilities when disclosing their competencies to reassure their clients. Michael shares examples of failed relationships with new mentees to point out his capabilities. Robert describes his insight on the motivations for disclosing his competencies as follows:

I think the mentees sometimes expect you to know or to bring somebody along who knows and can help them. But sometimes they're brave enough to say, 'Okay, we'll figure this out.'

According to Robert's experience, mentee assurance is reinforced by competency transparency. He relates how it can create an opportunity for the mentor to suggest members of their network as additional resources. This study also found that disclosing the mentor's competencies reminds mentors of their own experiences and gives them the confidence to engage with the prospective mentee's challenges. Priscilla related how her knowledge gives her confidence:

Having gone through all of that [being an entrepreneur] myself has given me the insight that I needed to pass on all the knowledge and experiences that I've gained to mentees.

Mentors mentioned sharing the realistic picture of being an entrepreneur, their experiences and how they have responded to challenging situations. They take their time to ensure that the discussion is in-depth so that the mentee can fully understand whom they are working with. It allows the mentee to relate to their mentor's experiences and establish whether the mentor can "contribute to an improvement of the individual or the business" (Catherine). On the other hand, Clive mentions how he often illustrates his skill and capability by offering to take on a task pro-bono to give the mentee a demonstration of how his experiences relate to the mentee's challenges.

b) *Explore challenge in context*

Mentors relate how important it is to connect their experiences to the context presented. Establishing this connection at this stage of the engagement continues to build mentee assurance in the mentor's ability. And making connections is an opportunity for in-depth understanding of mentee and enterprise problems. Listening and asking, "not even the tough, but the basic questions" (Nelly) is part of the mentor's

learning process. Mentors seem to wrestle between the mentee's desires versus their needs. Often, they identify a disparity between the mentee's desires and the needs identified in the mentor's assessment of the mentee. Edward describes this stage as a tense time for him, the "difficult part" of mentoring. Some mentors accept the mentee's chosen areas of improvement, while others recommend their assessment outcomes to the entrepreneur after evaluating the situation, hoping to have middle ground and merge of experience. However, Robert makes recommendations at this stage, and views them as his professional responsibility, he refers to his observations as the "factual situation", meaning that he would prefer to assess the situation to determine and confirm the areas where improvement is needed.

The notion of the mentor's position as being one of privilege and ensuring that they do not mislead mentees or give ineffective advice appears to be top of mind for mentors. They recognise the mentee's trust in them as they contextualise the challenge and the possible impact of the mentor's recommended way forward. They appear to experience some level of concern for any dissonance and making sure that they do not make errors, recognising that any errors could impact the entrepreneur and their efforts to develop their business. Edward explains his experience below:

> *It's a massively responsible space to be in, right? If I'm going to sit here mentoring a person who's been running a business for two years, who's just scraping by, and they're sitting with me because they'd like to take the business forward – if I get it wrong, that business goes under. So, it's a massive responsibility to mentor small to medium-sized enterprises in a depressed and contracting market because if you get it wrong, it goes wrong. For the mentee, that's much more significant than for me.*

c) Reframe challenges

According to mentors, this mentoring stage is the opportunity to showcase their critical thinking and reasoning skills and display their knowledge and experience against the given context. This study found that mentors begin to reframe the presented problems. They identify challenges they have experienced in the past and connect them to presented challenge(s) in a novel manner. Mentors use reframing to check for their understanding, allowing the mentees to correct them and present their view of the

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problem. Priscilla confirms that she checks that her experience applies to the new context. Edward concurred by emphasising the importance of understanding how to reframe the mentee's challenges and how important it is to be accurate. Edward stated that his "guidance of the person has got to be on point".

Mentors mention the caution they exercise in redefining their mentee's challenges and assessing all the aspects of the mentee's business venture to ensure that there are no other related aspects not understood but pertinent to their learning and focus. The caution arises when they draw from their existing knowledge, as often, in a leadership development problem for example, there are few sources of reference to consider and underlying issues. According to Catherine mentees expect them to reframe and give new insight. In Fiona's experience, reconciling the mentee's needs and her knowledge according to the presented context helps her understand her role and suggests a way to address the challenge.

> *[I] make sure that I understand what their needs are so that I understand what I'm supposed to do during our conversations and how to prompt them to think of what the next step would be.* (Fiona)

6.2.2 Rationality of thought process

d) Recognising the positive

Mentors emphasise the value of recognising the positive aspects of their mentee's progress in the challenges as they rationalise their thought process. They are often presented with improving the business' state or enhancing its performance, areas that relate to positive progression. In applying their existing knowledge, they acknowledge good mentee practices, but often still need mentee guidance in structuring effective solutions and thinking through untested options. Edward related an experience where he had to be positive and yet firm. He initially communicated his appreciation of the mentee's positive attributes and then suggested how the business would benefit from a shift in roles:

> *He was a successful businessman who had achieved a lot. I told him [the owner manager], I don't think I should be mentoring you at all. I don't think*

In recognising the positive aspect of the mentee's context, mentors are also found to encourage mentees to recognise their strengths and resources and communicate their abilities and goals in a positive light, assuring mentees of their confidence in their ability and understanding of their context. Appreciating the positive, according to mentors, includes recognising that possible solutions may arise from the mentees in such dialogue, and based on their deep contextual knowledge and experience. Nelly appreciates mentees and sees them in a positive light when they are confident in who they are and what they know, making spending time with them worthwhile.

e) Connect solutions to aspirations

The conversation about connecting possible solutions to the entrepreneur's aspirations appears to be an integral part of the mentor's role and an initial confirmation of mentor context understanding. Some mentors recognise that the problems indicated may not require immediate solutions; therefore, refining the fundamental issues before connecting them to possible aspirations is necessary at this stage; this realisation requires additional probing. Matthew mentioned making connections only once a consensus in knowledge has been reached. Michael cited an example of a mentee's enthusiasm to address possibilities before focusing on challenges he had identified as more pressing and how that could present obstacles to achieving the mentee's overall aspirations. Michael relays his experience as follows:

> *He wants to craft the ideal solution before he actually does something. We could have worked on the hard things of his business. But it was quite evident that we couldn't achieve some of those things if we didn't also focus on the softer space. And when we started to address some of the softer things, then the harder things started to fall into place.*

Clive and Fiona prefer that mentees go through a process of preparation before connecting their aspirations to solutions, preparation to the point that an expert could be invited into a conversation to support them if necessary. The analysis also found

that some mentors use this stage to determine whether to proceed with the relationship. Once more insightful goals and aspirations are presented against the mentor's existing knowledge, they again assess whether they are achievable or of interest to them and decide accordingly.

On the other hand, other mentors mention that whilst they have good knowledge of entrepreneurial principles, at this stage, they still do not have the contextual know-how to spontaneously address mentee challenges and aspirations. They are often compelled to research solutions and independently learn, making connections in subsequent conversations. Stepping away and researching new contextual solutions contributes to gaining new knowledge and modifying their existing knowledge. Robert and Brandon mentioned having to learn to adapt very quickly when observing that their experience does not apply to the context or when it applied to a limited extent and solutions had progressed further than their knowledge. Matthew agreed and described scenarios where he is constantly reading and learning to try and understand how he can add value based on situations presented.

6.3 Advise and co-create

The analysis revealed that mentors value a newfound sense of confidence after engaging with new context through supposition formulation. Once there is a reasonable level of consensus, they view progression in the relationship as the opportunity to support mentees through advice-giving, co-creating new solutions, and testing the validity of their newly merged knowledge. They appear to use this stage to draw and share insight from their capability assessment results, although others mention being guided purely by experience once contextual knowledge is more explicit. The role of the assessment tools appears to differ; some assess venture operational aspects, while others are used for psychosocial analyses. The data demonstrates that learning does not appear to occur during advice giving, but mainly during collaboration. An elaboration is shown below in *figure 19* and through the descriptions.
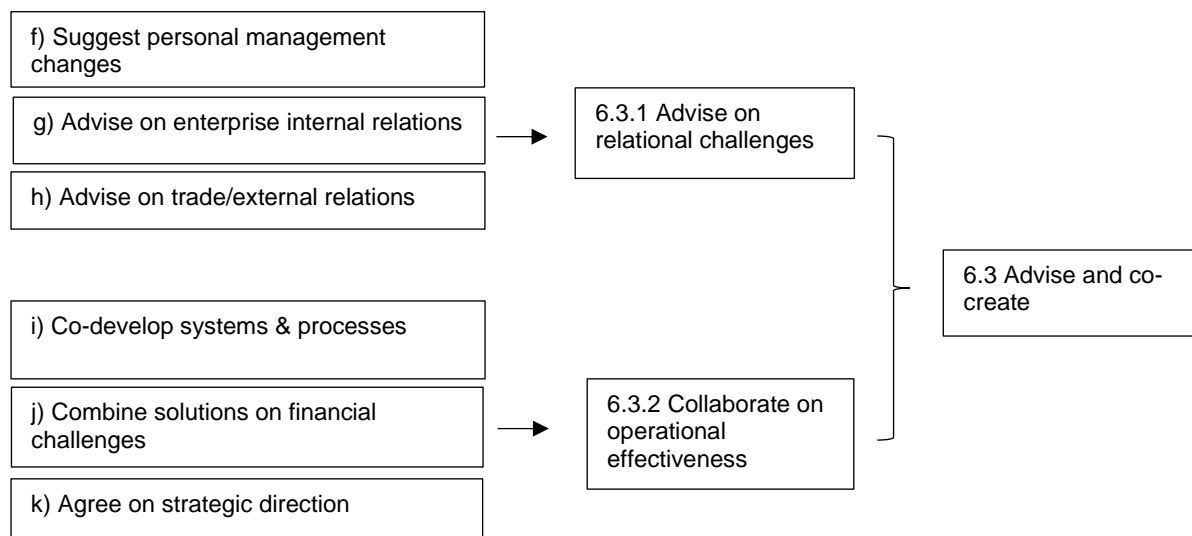
Figure 19: Advise and co-create

6.3.1 Advise on relational challenges

f) Suggest personal management changes

A form of advice frequently mentioned by mentors is suggested personal management changes, those they ascertain as of benefit or negative effect to their ventures. Some mentors prefer to approach mentoring by initially addressing the personal needs suggested by the mentee or identified through the mentor's assessment. Those who are comfortable addressing personal management changes mention the strength of this approach, with impact not always immediately detected, but sometimes realised in hindsight. The approach positively affects the mentee's attitude towards operating their ventures and impacts their general relations. Because mentors often describe themselves as "sounding boards", they discover multiple personal challenges that mentees are dealing with while they operate their ventures by listening attentively.

Margaret described a female entrepreneur challenged with work-life balance while running her business from home. The lack of separation between her personal time and business area harmed her well-being and lifestyle. Margaret subsequently made suggestions on a workable structure and balance, making a significant impact on the mentee's situation. Abigail had similar views to Margaret and recounted her experience as follows:

It was about having to find out why the prickliness existed, and once you could deal with that, you could then start [mentoring]. She's ended up being one of the stars and is performing in an amazing way.

Abigail suggested that her experience as a mentor has equipped her to recognise certain negative mentee behaviours. She suggests personal changes due to the negative impact on the mentee and their venture progression. Respondents also mentioned the challenge of mentoring mentees who work with their spouses or family members and the complexities accompanying such a setup. They related that sometimes there is a lack of recognition of the mentee's role in the venture separate from their identity in the home environment due to cultural norms. That situation requires mentors' suggestions for shifts in mentee recognition of the impact on others to benefit themselves and their enterprise. A few changes in action or attitude assists mentees with re-aligning and approaching the situation differently. Catherine gave the following example:

I've mentored female business owners from a Muslim background; it's a chauvinistic space to operate in. It doesn't have to be so, just because it's your husband that you're working with. Whilst they have to be subservient at home, they have to accept that their responsibilities are different around their role [within the enterprise]. It's about being able to separate what is personal from what is going on in the business and being able to clarify your roles.

g) Advise on internal enterprise relations

Developing the mentee's relational skills within their ventures appears to be a prevalent request from mentees. Mentors recognise that interpersonal skills are not a natural trait for many of their clients. As their enterprises expand and the number of employees increases, managing and interacting with many employees becomes a challenge. Catherine affirms her perception of interpersonal skills as critical to the functioning of a venture. Abigail concurred and mentioned a challenge with mentees who "have not made sound decisions" due to poor relational tendencies.

Often, the productivity and morale of the mentee's employees are at risk, and mentees are at times not able to address these issues. Here, mentors either use their experience and expertise to make suggestions or arrange for mentees to consult with an expert from the mentor's network. When presented with staff challenges, mentors mention the importance of fully understanding the challenge in context to suggest an agreeable way forward.

Matthew gave an example of the challenge of a mentee recruiting staff without clear role descriptions that complement venture needs; as a result, the mentee failed to recognise the value of a new staff member, which led to the mentee's frustration with staff performance. Raymond's example concerns a mentee's approach to staff remuneration and benefits. As their business grew and their staff members increased: "often mentees are not equipped or do not have the time to focus on staff management issues". Clive attributed his mentees' lack of human resource knowledge to mentee age and lack of experience and identified it as one of the top priorities and areas of solicited advice as a mentor, often requiring collaborative solutions to create mentee buy-in.

h) Advise on trade/external relations

According to mentors, mentees often struggle to relate with external stakeholders, specifically suppliers, and current and prospective clients, hence the need for support. Robert described some mentees as "unprofessional" at times because they lacked the knowledge of how to present themselves and what to expect from stakeholders. Such a situation is an opportunity to role model and share alternative approaches relating to others. Margaret mentioned a mentee who had difficulty arranging credit terms with a client, significantly impacting their business and cash flow. Mentors recognised that confidence in external relations is an essential leadership trait for entrepreneurs and mentioned mentees they advise due to uncalculated or risk-aversion.

Mentioned, is the positive impact of encouraging mentees to understand and relate to external stakeholders to advance their businesses. Leona's mentees have key international suppliers they have not met, she advised them on how to tread cautiously during their interactions. Leona was concerned about mentee risk of possible false

exposure, supplier misrepresentation and legitimacy. She mentioned the importance of her role in ensuring robust contracts are in place to minimise business risk, building the mentee's confidence and offering support in portraying a professional image. Clive gives an example of a mentee with minimal stakeholder engagement and communication skills. He encouraged her to engage and be visible within her network to benefit her enterprise. He described the result as follows:

She's gone out now and done a bit of PR work and realised that she's actually got a personality which is likeable, and she's picked up another handful of external winemakers for her business.

6.3.2 Collaborate on operational effectiveness

i) Co-develop systems and processes

Mentors mentioned the high frequency of system and process-related challenges as another key area where the application of their advice is required, allowing them to learn context-specific practices and create new tacit knowledge. Mentors mentioned how useful their assessment tools become at identifying possible areas to improve systems, particularly when they are highly experienced in a specific industry and know what should be in place. Robert described this as identifying "abnormalities jumping out".

Suggesting possible solutions to challenged systems and processes is said to be through detailed interaction between both parties. Mentors learn from the interaction and a solution arrived at by both the mentor and the mentee. They ensure that it is practically possible and that there is buy-in from the mentee on implementation. Mentors mention adjusting their perceptions and knowledge as they consolidate existing knowledge with current contextual challenges. When the mentor and mentee matching is not as requested, the mentor's maturity and approach to the collaborative nature of the relationship opens up avenues for growth in business acumen and value co-creation from both parties of the dyad.

According to mentors, opportunities to co-create solutions for processes and procedures vary. The need could be for processes related to managing the venture to technical and production-based processes, from purchasing machinery to optimising efficiency. According to Robert, because mentees differ in their requests and technology continues progressing, mentors need to be "agile" and keep themselves informed of technology advances to confidently offer sound advice for the collaboration. Openness and agility present learning opportunities from new context and adjusting existing knowledge.

> *Production systems change because clients or groups of clients are different … you go into the market and must develop a product for them. I think across the board, that means that I've had to learn and modify as well, very quickly.* (Robert)

To begin the co-creation of solutions for their clients, the onus lies with the mentor to draw from their experience and skill to distinguish where in the business process the solution could lie. Often, as mentioned by Edward, it can take a long time to reach the point of offering a solution because the "fit" differs and they rely on the mentee in assessing and confirming the "fit". Often, mentors feel confident to offer alternatives after a time of enquiry on attempted and failed solutions with the mentee and when the mentee feels comfortable to be completely transparent about what has transpired in their business. Matthew mentions an example of arriving at a point of trust in their relationship where the mentee takes the initiative outside of their scheduled meetings to present challenges that allow them to co-create, learn, and grow.

Fiona gave an example of a client who avoids engaging with particular business areas, yet they cause operational challenges; she relayed how her advice and support has assisted in providing specific co-developed solutions to previously avoided problems. However, according to Catherine, while it is a learning process for all, it is the mentee's responsibility to take full accountability for the decisions made once the advice has been given. She mentioned how mentees have the right not to adopt their mentor's recommendations, therefore forfeiting the opportunity to co-create solutions. On the other hand, other mentors mentioned how valuable their advice is after understanding the new context to often "desperate" mentees. Such mentees prefer to implement the

advice from mentors rather than co-create solutions based on the assumption that the mentor is the expert. In that instance, they mentioned the importance of mentors being open to learning and experiencing new things to avoid offering advice that could take mentees in an unhelpful direction.

j) Combine solutions to financial challenges

This study found that most mentees request financial support from their mentors. Although most mentors are familiar with this request, the contexts and approaches vary, which presents learning opportunities for mentors who struggle in this area. There appear to be three situations where finances are concerned, according to mentor experience. First, the mentor would ask to review their mentee's business finances to gauge its performance. Secondly, mentees are transparent and forthcoming with requests for support with their financial planning and knowledge. Thirdly, mentees ask for support in acquiring funding for their ventures and hope mentors can arrange the funding through their network or direct them to funders. To address the first scenario, Raymond, who believes that, initially, standard financial principles apply, relies on his assessment tools for insight, he appears comfortable with giving financial advice and gives an example of his approach. He initially analyses the gearing of a mentee's business over a period and then co-creates solutions for improvement based on the results of his analysis.

Financial planning and the approach to business finance is the second area that appears to be a challenge where most mentors offer support. Clyde gauges his success with a mentee based on the financial outcomes reviewed over a specific period. He focuses on working with mentees to observe "turnovers increasing and improving over a period of time". Edward believes in the importance of closely tracking finances within a business and ensures that someone in the mentee's venture is identified to exclusively focus on the area with him. He believes that if it is not the enterprise owner who is responsible, he would have regular conversations with individuals who are or will be accountable for the finances of their business.

Fiona's area of expertise is finance. She facilitates workshops for entrepreneurial mentees to "make sense of the numbers". She mentioned how she is often selected

by mentees who experience challenges in that area, which is often "an area in their business that they don't want to touch". She relates her reasoning as follows:

… [I focus on financials] for them to understand why there is a need for them to look at and understand the numbers and then to do forecasting and budgeting and then try to understand the difference compared to their actions. To understand where the variances are and what the reason for that is. For them to put proper processes in place going forward.

Thirdly, mentors emphasise the significance of external funding for mentees. They believe one of their responsibilities is to direct mentees to funders or institutions that can offer funding. Mentors often mention supporting mentees to secure private and public funds which entails a great amount of paperwork.

k) Agree on strategic direction

This analysis found that one of the core roles identified by mentors is to assist in steering their mentee's business into short-term stability and the long-term capability to achieve outlined goals. As mentioned, mentors are often presented with a challenge that is a symptom of a different organisational need and according to them, their role is to learn to get to the root of that need. Most mentors mentioned how often mentees relate their goals and business strategy as areas that require intervention; however, they equally relay of how common it is for mentees to be challenged by their strategic direction. Mentees require advice and support with adapting to new strategies and implementing new behaviours, creating opportunities to learn and co-create on strategic direction for mentors.

It is important to engage with individuals responsible for implementing the strategy according to mentors. Assessing the strategic capabilities of the enterprises' employees and directing co-creation to the correct individual(s) is vital. Offering support on the direction of their mentee's ventures becomes a significant responsibility requiring experience. The study found that when the strategic direction is beyond the expertise or learning boundaries of the mentor, mentees often request the assistance of an alternative advisor for give guidance in that area. Mentors emphasised that it is

unfortunate that the effect of the strategic direction co-created may not be recognised in the short term but in retrospect, long after the conclusion of the mentoring relationship. On the other hand, Raymond mentioned that mentors might have little control over the quality of strategic advice given, due to the macro environment's negative impact on the mentee's business, regardless of the agreed strategic direction. He elaborated as follows:

> *Sometimes you do your best, but unfortunately, the environment or the economy or something like that doesn't allow for everything to take place at the right time to turn things around.* (Raymond)

Leona's experience of necessity-driven mentees from disadvantaged backgrounds includes mentees who may be clear on their goals but completely unaware of the "avenues" to take due to a lack of business knowledge. She described the privilege of learning from "walking beside them" as they journey through the experience of entrepreneurship and strategy development and implementation. She believes that this saves mentees time and highlights the value of mentoring. Margaret concurred with Leona regarding the level of business knowledge of some clients and the amount of strategic direction required. She gave the example of the country's history and how there were no opportunities for role models within families and minimal social capital in the past. In this context, a mentor learns a different way of guiding the mentee in steering their business in the right strategic direction; this, according to Margaret, can be significant.

6.4 Reflect on advice internalisation

As part of mentor learning, it was found that they contemplate mentee internalisation of their advice, and whether their presence affected the mentee's well-being and the performance of their enterprises. They seek insight as they consider areas of advice given and collaboration conducted. They also establish whether there has been a shift in the mentee's situation as a result of the relationship. The reflection process also helps mentors to assess their growth, and skill in consolidating new and existing knowledge. In some instances, mentors concluded that the mentee had not implemented their advice or that it had not noticeably influenced the mentee or their venture, illustrated below in *figure 20.*
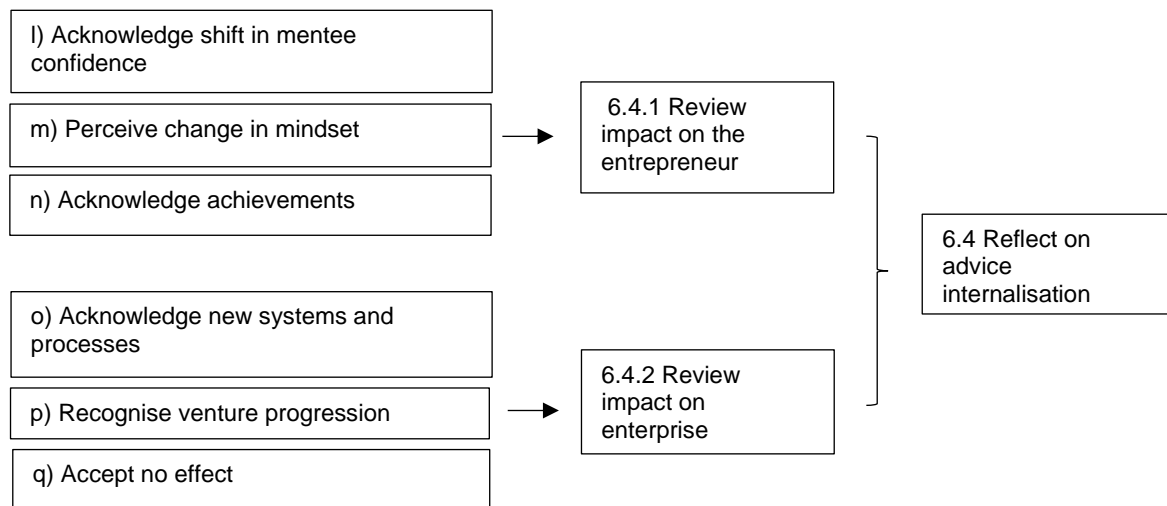
Figure 20: Reflect on advice internalisation

6.4.1   Review impact on the entrepreneur

l)   Acknowledge shift in mentee confidence

Mentors mention their intention to motivate mentees when they start the mentoring relationship. They recognise this positive impression through a shift in mentee confidence as they progress through the mentoring relationship. Mentors mention learning about the approaches that work and those that do not from a comparison between the mentee's uncertainty at the beginning of the relationship to the observed change in mentee attitude towards the end of the relationship. Mentors describe observing how positive intervention results in mentees experiencing newfound conviction in themselves and what their ventures can achieve. With some mentors, a strong sense of confidence is observed in the correlation between their influence and a change in the mentee's behaviour. Michael describes this sense as follows:

> *If it wasn't for the mentoring and the relationship, we have … I don't think he would have achieved that. The impact of me on him, I think it was mind-blowing. He never expected to go on that journey, and he's seeing the amount of growth and self-confidence.*

Mentors report observing that a shift in the mentee's self-belief can also be observed in their behaviour. They mention noticing how mentees seem to be more confident, describing them with terms such as becoming "bubbly" (Leona) and "extroverted" (Clive), compared to how they earlier described them as wanting to "give up" (Robert). Mentors mentioned noticing that with more confidence, mentees changed how they communicated. Leona gave an example of her mentee's general change in communicating with others. She highlighted that previously her mentee would respond to questions as one would do in an interview. When that manner changed, and her mentee became more relaxed and eloquent, Leona saw this as an indication that her mentee was less nervous and more confident. Clive had a similar view, giving an example of an introverted mentee who did not feel comfortable engaging with her network in the wine-making industry. After encouraging her, Clive found she was more confident networking with her peers.

Abigail mentioned that she noticed a change in the way her mentee addressed stakeholders; he spoke differently. When asked what was different, the mentee referred to their conversations as the motivating factor for their confidence he felt confident to achieve agreed goals. Abigail mentioned observing a "completely different and new demeanour" in him. For Matthew, the fact that his mentee started contacting him without Matthew initiating interaction was a signal of their improved self-confidence. His mentee started openly speaking and calmly communicating about problems encountered in his business, signifying a change in his mentee's assurance for the better. Margaret referred to a mentee who after a certain period into the mentoring relationship, felt more comfortable speaking to her and started relating more, aligning to, and tapping into the mentor's business practices.

m) Perceive change in mindset

While mentors recognise the desire of mentees to learn and improve their skillset by seeking the support of a mentor as a role model, one of the changes they observed, learnt from, and can be attributed to the mentoring relationship is how the mentee changes their mentality or outlook, gains an improved ability to perceive challenges differently, and their ability to cope in challenging situations. Margaret described individuals who are more willing to experiment and begin to think bigger and desire

more for themselves and their ventures. Some mentors take credit for this and associate this change with their role modelling, claiming their mindset influenced the shift in mentee outlook. They believe that mentees observe how they present themselves and process certain situations through critical thinking and have learned to mirror this behaviour and adopt a similar mindset.

In the analysis, mentors described a change in the mentee's mindset observed when mentees gain more insight into certain situations. They describe mentees clarifying previously unclear issues and gaining confidence in co-creating solutions. On the other hand, Fiona mentioned a mentee who thought engaging in a mentoring relationship would be a "quick fix" – they did not appreciate the collaborative nature of the process. Their viewpoint changed once they appreciated the approach and started associating results from their hard work with the mentorship relationship. She described observing a renewed "sense of responsibility" in the mentee. Catherine spoke about learning of an improved mindset from an example of a mentee whose attitude changed towards staff after they identified the root cause of an initially misconstrued problem of employee absenteeism:

> *There was a problem with staff absenteeism, and the mentee thought that they were being lazy, then after some research, we quickly realised that it's related to how high blood pressure and diabetes emerge more than the typical instance, which ties in well with the workforce and why they don't come to work on a Monday. So, the attitude of the owner changed towards their workforce once that information had been revealed.*

Mentors also mentioned new confidence they observed in mentees and how they presented their ventures as a result after experiencing mentoring. Nelly mentored a young entrepreneur who initially relied heavily on her entrepreneurial guidance and support. The mentee received an opportunity to represent her company abroad and, through her growth during the mentoring relationship, gave Nelly feedback on the confidence she built within herself and in presenting the "Africanness" of her product to the point that she received client orders from renowned international brands. Michael described a change in his mentee who had started the relationship feeling "overwhelmed". Besides being a mentor, Michael is a certified coach and gave an

example of a situation where mentoring was more effective than coaching the mentee. After initially focusing on developing his mentee's professional skills, Michael described how he encouraged him to present his business for funding with potential investors. This is how he described the impact he observed in his mentee's behaviour:

Exposing him to certain situations – I think that's also where the mentor is different to a coach. A mentor can be with the person and hold their hand in certain circumstances; the coach isn't always there for that. (Michael)

n) Acknowledge achievements

According to mentors, when there is a tangible and positive mentee achievement, it reinforces their learning and practice approach. Michael's mentee made it to the final stage of a funding competition after they worked together on the competition requirements. Educational achievement was prevalent with mentees attached to a university programme where mentoring and entrepreneurship development were prerequisites. The benefits from the combination demonstrated an approach that mentors learnt from and would like to possibly recommend in future relationships. Leona described two mentees from disadvantaged backgrounds who were subsequently accepted into a university degree programme where mentoring was a contributing factor. They were awarded a certificate of achievement on the programme and registered for further studies.

Mentors reflect on and acknowledge learning enterprise skills from their clients. Raymond described a mentee whose achievements he admires to the point that he is preparing to partner with him on a business idea. This mentee is an entrepreneur who won a cash prize based on his business plan. Raymond described his approach as listening attentively to the mentee and advising him accordingly based on what he had understood was his contextual situation and his knowledge. The mentee is now a successful chicken farmer, and Raymond is considering starting a farm with his assistance. His mentee has gone on to mentor other chicken farmers, and they have become friends. Michael, on the other hand, described reflecting on the achievement of his mentee when he successfully recreated his brand, which has attracted new

customers. Michael's mentee had not created a brand profile when he met Michael and eventually benefited from the branding activities they worked on together.

In other instances, mentors reflect on learning from making difficult decisions with their mentees, for example, an exit strategy. Raymond explains that he supported an entrepreneur through the closing of their business and the "depressing" feeling of observing them consolidate their life savings and efforts. He emphasised learning from the experience and acknowledging the situation not as a failure but as an achievement. The entrepreneur had been through a process where they had made all possible efforts to save their business, but due to an uncontrollable macro-environment issue and its implications on their business, they were forced to close. Robert described supporting them respectfully with the closure as follows:

> *That's something that can be quite depressing at times. By the time you get involved, they've put their life savings and everything into the business. Although after two years, we built a relationship with them and did our best to assist. We were once again looking at an exit strategy kind of situation. Sometimes you do your best, but unfortunately the environment or the economy or something like that doesn't allow for everything to take place at the right time to turn things around.*

6.4.2 Review impact on the enterprise

   o) Acknowledge new systems and processes

Often, the implementation of agreed new processes and systems and their success are identified by mentors as achievements, growth, and a positive impact. When mentors describe how a process or system has been tried and tested with positive results, it reflects growth for both parties. For mentors, they would have experienced an opportunity to guide mentees in a context and an area that was previously a challenge or unknown. Robert stated that he observed instances where new systems recommendations had been implemented and had a positive effect. He emphasised the shift in attitude once mentees associate the achievement with their mentor's support and mentoring relationship.

At times, specific systems and processes had multiple effects in other areas of the mentee's business, leading to increased opportunities, including increasing the venture's sustainability in a volatile economic environment. In some instances, industry compliance, drawing up business plans for funding, and company registrations have opened new possibilities for mentees. Michael viewed this as creating the "right foundation" and profoundly impacting the enterprise. Matthew shared an example of what he referred to as "fixing the behaviour to fix the process". He described putting things into context for the mentee to understand the impact of not making a change. He observed how contributing to the context not only changed the mentee's behaviour but also made a change to processes. He noticed how small changes like delegating responsibilities led to an organised individual and work environment.

For many mentors, structure and consistency are essential when they speak about the impact of new systems and processes – for example, regular meetings with pertinent individuals within the mentee's business. Fiona mentioned how structure equipped mentees to deal with future challenges. Matthew described the proactive behaviour resulting from implementing new systems and procedures, like co-creating a structure for mentees to work more at strategic than operational levels and introducing business measures and indicators. This ultimately supported the growth of their ventures and encouraged mentees to plan for their future. Matthew mentioned noticing a "completely different approach to their decision-making".

p) Recognise venture progression

When strategic decision-making was practised and implemented mentees became more competitive in their respective industries, they found new opportunities for the sustainability of their businesses and were more flexible in adapting to suggested new approaches. According to mentors, they also began to think more about the future of their businesses and their staff. Margaret confirmed the outcome of her advice with the mentee who implemented significant changes by separating their personal and business affairs. The change "made their business run more efficiently", and the mentee was able to split their focus when required.

Among the signs of venture progression that mentors recognised were growth in the number of employees and clients. Mentors were particularly pleased when they witnessed additional staff employed during the mentoring relationship. Leona described how production in her mentee's business increased significantly when the mentee agreed to invest in new machinery and employ a new staff member. Enjoying increased revenue from a rise in productivity gave this mentee the confidence to relocate from working from home to renting commercial space. Observing this progression in her mentee and their venture increased Leona's confidence in their ability to manage their resources and led her to commit to sourcing finance for them.

Clive and Abigail recognised their mentees' venture progression through their acquisition of new clients, increased revenue, and newfound responsibilities. According to Clive, mentees sometimes need a "bit of a push in the right direction from someone" to recognise their potential and reap the benefits. Abigail described a mentee who "could not identify a buying signal" from potential clients but significantly increased their portfolio during the mentoring relationship, with their responsibilities increasing and their feeling of preparedness for the change. Robert, Pamela, and Raymond are guided by ratio indicators, increased revenue and an assessment of the financial status of the mentee's business. Raymond expands on his approach below:

> *It's very easy if you look at the business side because I can look at financials. It's not difficult to measure achievements when it comes to mentoring, especially in my industry in hospitality; there's the bottom line that we can measure up against.*

q) Accept no effect

With a commitment from both members of the dyad to the mentoring relationship and process, mentors believe that whilst there are many opportunities to support mentees with their ventures, they also learnt and acknowledge that there are occasions when their support has no effect. In most cases, the explanation for this seems to be the time it could take for significant change to be realised. Mentors seem comfortable with the possibility that their support may take a while to be realised and do not appear to associate it with failure. The analysis found that on some occasions, mentors address

the possibility of a lack of noticeable impact in the initial conversation with the mentee in an attempt to manage expectations. Other mentors are transparent about the impact of their support depending entirely on the mentee's openness to the mentoring relationship and process. Edward acknowledged this as follows:

> *Something that I say today to a mentee might not have an impact today. But six years from now they may sit back and say, 'Hang on! Now I understand what he meant with risk identification, quantification, and mitigation, because I've just lost my "bakkie" [truck].'*

Some mentors who mentioned being clear about their limitations have learnt to be comfortable with their lack of influence and the observable effects of their mentoring. Raymond spoke about doing his "best" and being unable to please everyone due to matters beyond his control and understanding his parameters. According to Raymond, it is not always possible to "turn things around". However, in another instance, he recalled having a sense of regret that he was unable to make a difference and feeling that he had "let people down". He attributes it to the "ups and downs of mentoring". Robert referred to having to be "thick-skinned", which meant not being too sensitive when situations do not go according to plan.

Mentors noted that the mentee's lack of commitment to the mentoring relationship and journey is one possible reason for the lack of effect on themselves and their enterprises. Mentors mentioned a misalignment of expectations, and once those are not addressed, the mentee often disengages and either no longer continues with the relationship or is no longer open to the process. In some cases, the mentee also does not implement solutions suggested by the mentor, and there is little collaboration. Mentors acknowledge that it is the mentee's prerogative to implement their suggestions and that they have no control over this. Edward mentioned how mentoring is often misunderstood and how he needs to educate mentees on their role and expectations so that both the mentor and the mentee benefit from the experience.

6.5 Trust
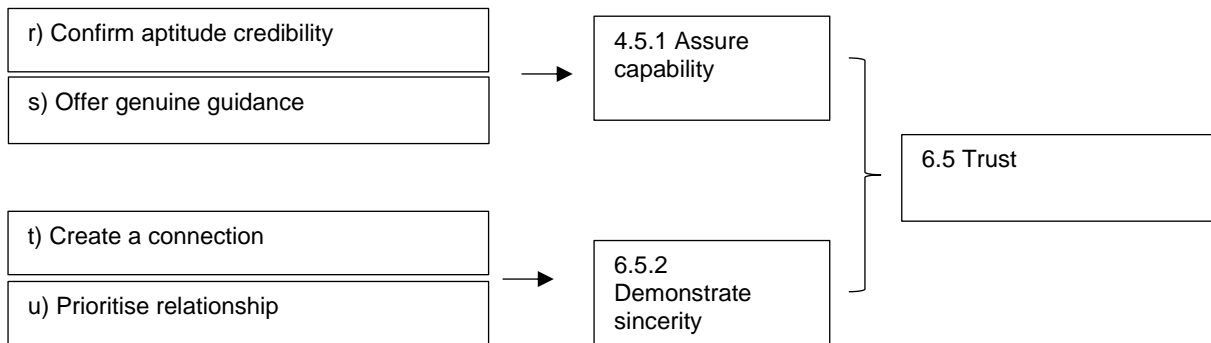
Figure 21: Trust

6.5.1 Assure capability

The analysis indicates that trust in the sense of assured capability and a demonstration of sincerity between both parties in the dyad is essential, particularly at this stage of the relationship. According to mentors, building trust at this stage illustrates that the entrepreneur can depend on the mentor's expertise and experience, even if there is an element of co-creating. Mentors mention how mentees gain confidence in their mentor's expertise by learning about their authentic entrepreneurial experiences, trusting that they will give genuine guidance. It aligns both parties and gives them a common base to work from. Raymond referred to shared experiences of mentor failure as creating a trusting environment, an illustration of their experience with the consequence of certain decisions, it indicates their humility and openness to learning. In Raymond's words, mentees need to know "that mentors have the knowledge to deal with [their challenges], not merely from a positive aspect."

6.5.2 Demonstrate sincerity

Creating an authentic relationship where both parties are assured of their commitment over time is foundational for the dyadic interaction and success. Trust is seen to illustrate integrity and a sense of reliability for mentees and gives mentors a sense of confidence in their interactions. Mentors refer to trust as a gateway for developing a fruitful relationship. Margaret mentioned the importance of creating the space to "stay connected from a personal perspective" to allow the entrepreneur to comfortably remain vulnerable throughout the relationship, encouraging transparency in the

partnership. Margaret emphasised the importance of the partnership or dyadic nature of the relationship in mentioning that:

> *If we don't have a relationship of trust, the mentee is not going to open up to me. [If there is no trust] I'm not going to be free to kind of just say and do things together. We need to stay connected from a personal perspective … It's not just me going in and providing the assistance; it's a partnership.*

> *For a long time, they don't trust you and we need to learn how to make them feel comfortable and open with us because, for as long as they don't trust you, they will not open up, and the relationship will not work. We need a leadership course on emotional intelligence.* (Brandon)

Mentors believed that for certain mentees, entering into a relationship with an advisor could be daunting, which leads mentors to find ways to put the mentee at ease and encourage freedom of expression. Brandon described mentees who are initially shy and not forthcoming with information. His approach to lessen the perhaps overwhelming perception of the interaction and build trust slowly is through telephone conversations, they break barriers and assist the mentee in feeling comfortable with the interaction. For Brandon, that results in open communication when they meet face-to-face, and the mentee feeling at ease with disclosing information, it contributes to the success of their mentoring relationship. Leona concurred, mentioning the importance of the mentee's relaxed state, and acknowledged that the mentor is initially a stranger at the start of the mentoring relationship. She intends to create familiarity through familiarity around the relationship:

> *I don't want to create a rigid block around us and approach it as the mentor, but rather the issue of us being friends. It's very important that they [mentees] relax, as I am somebody they never knew.* (Leona)

6.6 New tacit knowledge creation

For mentors, the outcome of learning to adapt their existing entrepreneurial knowledge with new contextual knowledge while mentoring for mentors is new tacit knowledge

creation. Mentors express how much the experience is edifying and meaningful. Some quotations from mentors are reflected below.

Mentorship complements my skill set. (Edward)

I am really learning a lot coming from mostly the tobacco and clothing industries. I thrive in the relationship because I'm learning new things every day. It's so varied that it keeps me on my toes and makes sure that I have an idea of what is happening in all those industries (Fiona)

I've had to adapt as well. So, I think across the board, that means that I've had to learn and adapt very quickly. I sometimes walk away and say, okay, I know how I would have done it. That's the first time that I see something like it. (Robert)

I've also learned a lot from them, things I was not aware of. Before meeting with my mentees, I've needed to prepare. I would take books and so on. They challenged me; they challenged me to think outside the box. (Brandon)

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, what has been demonstrated from the analysis is mentor experience as they learn from new context and adapt their existing knowledge in practice. Mentors relay a process of interaction and interplay between supposition formulation, advising and co-creation, and reflection on their impact on mentee internalisation as a form of adapting their existing knowledge. The interaction appears complex and unique to the mentee's disposition, and openness to engagement. Mentors mention learning at every stage of this mentoring phase and, in due course, creating new tacit knowledge, reconciling the initial contextual knowledge gaps. According to mentors, trust between the mentor and mentee was found to be fundamental for the foundation and successful progression of the relationship. The illustration below, *figure 22,* demonstrates the consolidated findings in this chapter. The next chapter addresses the third and final research sub-question.
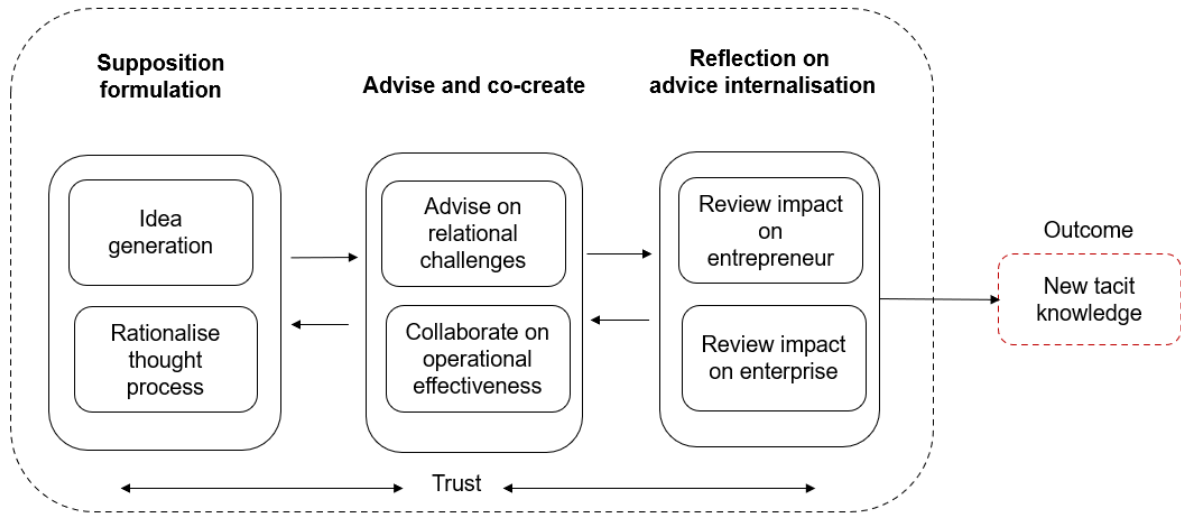
Figure 22: Mentor adaptation and bridging contextual knowledge gaps

7. THE SHAPING OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND MENTORSHIP PRACTICE

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the three analysis and findings chapters; it examines the themes that emerge from the data to address the third research sub-question, *how does learnt context shape the mentor's professional knowledge and mentorship practice?* The chapter examines the themes that emerge from the data presented in several inductive forms, qualitative descriptions (Nieuwenhuis, 2015); inductive analysis structures similar to Gioia *et al's.,* (2012) first-order quotes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions; and supplementary data tables based on a sample of respondent quotations (Hempel, Tracey, and Weber, 2020).

The initial themes that emerge from the data in response to the sub-question are 1) personal development, 2) enhanced entrepreneurial acumen, and 3) integrate advanced knowledge. From a mentor's personal development perspective, the data shows that the experience of bridging contextual knowledge gaps is meaningful, inspiring, and often a "mirror" or reflection of their unresolved personal and professional issues. A social understanding that goes beyond the boundaries of the relationship is mentioned. For mentors, the experience is key in dismantling social differences; it reduces social divides and preconceived mentor perspectives; for some, the personal impact is said to also mitigate certain aspects of the historical legacy of Apartheid. Mentors also include how the experience develops their entrepreneurial acumen through the enhancement of their interpersonal skills, communication skills, and entrepreneurial competence. The experience and learning are consolidated and integrated into various contexts.

Figure 23: Influence of bridging contextual knowledge gaps on learning and future relationships

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions

a) Enhanced meaningfulness

b) Inspiration from the experience → 7.2.1 Enhanced personal relevance

c) Acknowledged impact of connection

d) Appreciated mentee personal situation

e) Reconciled contextual disparities → 7.2.2 Enhanced contextual empathy

f) Acknowledged socio-economic environment

7.2 Personal development

g) Learnt to adapt advising approach

h) Enhanced self-perception → 7.2.3 Behavioural relevance

i) Learnt new traits

j) Social awareness

k) Enhanced self-awareness → 7.3.1 Developed interpersonal skills

l) Recognised different perspectives

m) Refined financial management awareness

n) Learnt new processes and structures → 7.3.2 Developed entrepreneurial competence

o) Recognised mentee business acumen

7.3 Enhanced entrepreneurial acumen

p) Recognised value of listening

q) Increased open-mindedness → 7.3.3 Developed communication skills

r) Recognised value of asking questions

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ s) Assign learning into different areas  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘          ┌──────────────────┐
                                                      │ 7.4.1 Consolidate│
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐    ───▶  │ new learning     │
│ t) New-found confidence                  │         └──────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘                                   ┌──────────────────┐
                                                                               │ 7.4 Integrate    │
                                                                               │ advanced tacit   │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐                                   │ knowledge        │
│ u) Recognise ideal attitudes             │                                   └──────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ v) Recognise self-belief                 │         ┌──────────────────┐
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘         │ 7.4.2 Incorporate│
                                               ───▶  │ signalling       │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐         │ capabilities     │
│ w) Recognise risk-taker                  │         └──────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ x) Recognise the conclusion of the       │
│ relationship                             │
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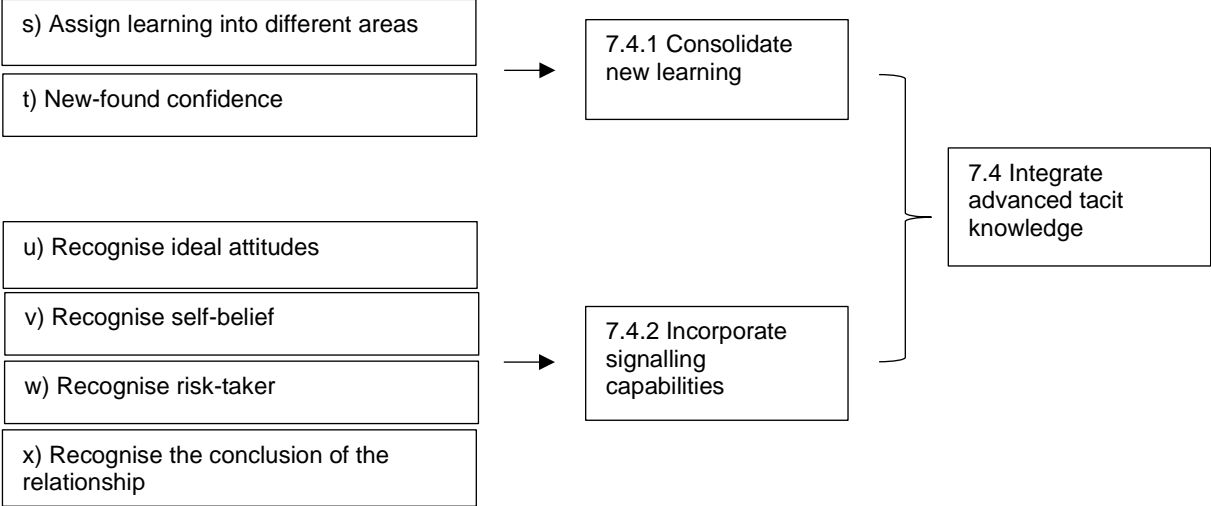
Table 15**:** Influence of bridging contextual knowledge gaps on learning and future relationships: Dimensions, themes categories and quotations

First-order concepts, second-order themes, aggregate dimensions	Representative quotations
7.2 Aggregate dimension: Personal development	
7.2.1 Enhanced *personal relevance* a) Enhanced meaningfulness	a1) "It's the reason why I get up in the morning, it's just to see the personal growth." (Fiona) a2) "I must be honest, it's something that has become an important element of my life. It helps me not only on my personal side, but I also get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people grow and succeed." (Raymond) a3) "Mentorship actually complements my skill set. It gives me energy; I've got to give something back." (Edward) a4) "Wow, I've got goosebumps, an amazing journey. I didn't think when I went into the mentorship agreement that this will be where we would end up." (Michael)
b) Inspiration from the experience	b1) "To see somebody actually excel and succeed, their dream has now become a reality – at the end of the day it's very edifying. You don't ever underestimate them." (Clive) b2) "They also inspire me with their ambition and their graces." (Priscilla) b3) "I feel like a proud mum. They actually helped me grow." (Leona) b4) "So, it's helped me also to connect with some of the issues that came up in a conversation on a personal perspective." (Margaret) b5) "You must be very careful when they are actually in operation because of experience and history that you don't mould them and put them in a little box." (Clive) b6) "If I'm specific, it's really given me confidence." (Raymond)
c) Acknowledged impact of connection	c1) "Some of these people have become very good friends." (Robert) c2) "It's an interdependent nature when you look at my values. What I've managed to do is that I learn as much as I'm offering the other way around." (Matthew) c3) "I love the connection between the mentee and myself and the ability to help." (Margaret)
7.2.2 *Enhanced contextual empathy* d) Appreciated mentee personal situation	d1) "When you hear their stories, you know, and the hardships that certain people have gone through, it saddens you." (Pamela) d2) "You learn sometimes how people view things differently from how you view them. I'm learning and experiencing that people grew up differently than how I grew up." (Michael) d3) "Their willingness to try irrespective is a bit humbling sometimes." (Michael) d4) "It's amazing because I'm formally mentoring people for the first time. I was naïve. I see the challenges that people face." (Leona)

e) Reconciled contextual disparities	e1) "It's so varied that it keeps me on my toes and making sure that I have an idea of what is happening in all those industries. I thrive on that; I'm learning new things every day." (Fiona)
	e2) "I'm learning about what's happening in the construction industry, in the death industry." (Edward)
	e3) "They taught me the modern way of doing business." (Brandon)
	e4) "They've taught me a few things on the natural side of nutrition which I never thought of specifically relating to cannabis, which has come into the market just recently." (Clive)
f) Acknowledge socio-economic environment	f1) "I get to learn about my country. I get to learn about the economy. I get to learn about what's happened in the township and society." (Edward)
	f2) "Mentoring that works still sits as a context of privilege." (Nelly)
	f3) "It's a local or township-based economy. It's a different way of thinking. It was as a result of having no alternative, which means it's either this or nothing else. They had no other alternative [but to become entrepreneurs]." (Robert)
	f4) "It's a massive responsibility to mentor small to medium-sized enterprises in a depressed and contracting market because if you get it wrong, it goes wrong. Much more significant [for them, than for me]." (Edward)
7.2.3 Enhanced self-confidence	
g) Leant to adapt advising approach	
	g1) "I have to adapt as well. So, I think across the board that means that I've had to learn and adapt very quickly." (Robert)
	g2) "I had to go and research how to go about that in order for me to come back to her and assist her." (Leona)
	g3) "I find it to be a wonderful learning experience. It forces one to go and read up and remain current and topical." (Margaret)
	g4) "You learn to see the signs and take your time. Sometimes you go down one particular road, and it's not the right road. Yeah, and you have to pivot." (Matthew)
h) Enhanced self-perception	h1) "I'm going to leave some kind of legacy. I get the sense that I made a difference, makes me want to do more." (Matthew)
	h2) "Before meeting with my mentees, I would need to prepare, right? I would read books and so on. They challenged me to think outside the box." (Brandon)
	h3) "It's definitely kept me fresh, I guess self-promotion." (Nelly)
i) Learnt new traits	i1) "I like working with people. So, it's very edifying for my personality trait. You've got to be open-minded to it because a lot of people are just like, 'Oh no, this is bad and that's it.'" (Clive)
	i2) "I do a lot of disciplinaries …'cos companies ask me to do that. It's taught me a combination of empathy, but at the same time, structure in doing a disciplinary, and when you have to dismiss someone." (Raymond)

	i3) "So the other impact on me is really that it's a learning thing – I'm constantly reading and constantly understanding." (Matthew)

7.3 Overarching dimension: Enhanced entrepreneurial acumen

7.3.1 *Developed interpersonal skills* j) Social awareness	j1) "It helps me not only on my personal side. I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people grow and succeed." (Raymond) j2) "To see somebody actually excel and succeed, their dream has now become a reality, at the end of the day is edifying." (Clive) j3) "The reward for me personally is to see someone fly, for someone to say, 'This has changed my life' has got to be the most impactful thing for me." (Abigail)
k) Enhanced self-awareness	k1) "Edifying if you've got the right match with a mentee, otherwise it can be frustrating if you land up with the wrong pairing. It allows you to get to know yourself better." (Catherine) k2) "For me personally, that was also the learning – that I'm not somebody that takes risks easily. I'm risk averse. I need to put my own risk-averseness aside to help this person. And that for me was also learning." (Michael) k3) "I also learned a lot from them, things I am not aware of, you have to think." (Brandon) k4) "I also think the self-doubt that goes with running your own business as a woman, I think it's helped me to kind of work through because I also have my self-doubt." (Margaret)
l) Recognised different perspectives	l1) "I've also learned from the way they run their business. I kind of think that I could change in my business and ask what I should do differently." (Margaret) l2) "You learn sometimes how people view things differently from what you view." (Michael) l3) "I also learned a lot from them, things I am not aware of, it taught me more about the modern way of doing business." (Brandon) l4) "I learnt that some people do certain things and apply certain things in the industries that I look at it and go, 'Wow, that's useful.'" (Matthew)
7.3.2 *Developed entrepreneurial competence* m) Refined financial awareness	m1) "I've also learnt and grown from the relationship. I've learnt to keep an eye on my finances." (Margaret) m2) "One of the things, and its business partners, in terms of their kick-out margins, is that they're very strict on margins. The margins should go in a certain direction and they [the mentee] should increase it. We quickly organise data, it's always different." (Robert) m3) "You would have to familiarise yourself with the financials of the company. There were many financial ratios that I had a very superficial understanding about and to tell them why some of their decisions are good decisions and some are bad." (Catherine)
n) Learnt new processes and structures	n1) "I do a lot of disciplinaries …'cos companies ask me to do that. It's taught me a combination of empathy but at the same time structure in doing a disciplinary, and when you have to dismiss someone." (Raymond)

	n2) "The mentee has helped me in my life tremendously with the process of chicken farming." (Raymond)
	n3) "I'm learning about the technical stuff." (Matthew)
	n4) "So it's not only relying on your experience, it's also saying what are the current structures and the thinking in the field." (Catherine)
o) Recognised mentee business acumen	o1) "They challenged me; they challenged me to think outside the box." (Brandon)
	o2) "Often you can still learn from them without realising. So, you must just be very wary of moulding them before you actually give them an opportunity to actually say what they want to do." (Clive)
	o3) "Although I have production knowledge, every time production systems change because clients or groups of clients are different. And their demands are different. So, every time you learn something new." (Robert)
	o4) "I looked at the product that they made, and I thought that is very, very cumbersome and it's something that I'll never get involved in." (Leona)
7.3.3 Developed communication skills	
p) Recognised the value of listening	p1) "So I just believe that if you listen, you learn from the person and then you can advise correctly." (Raymond)
	p2) "Look, see and then support rather than just dive in and say, 'Do this, do that." (Clive)
	p3) "First, I am a sounding board; I am not there to make decisions for them. I am here to listen to what their ideas are. I just steer them in the right direction" (Fiona)
q) Increased open-mindedness	q1) "You know, you've got to be open-minded to it because a lot of people are just like, 'Oh no, this is bad', and that's it." (Clive)
	q2) "[You learn] how you deal with the different situations put in front of you. Dealing with a frustrated entrepreneur could be challenging and require you to be able to sometimes talk through your own frustrations." (Catherine)
	q3) "I thrive on that; I'm learning new things every day." (Fiona)
r) Recognised value of asking questions	r1) "I ask difficult questions depending on the relationship that you have with your client, ask the questions and give them straight out and then some of the stuff they need to hear although they don't like it." (Robert)
	r2) "Ask the questions, help her find her own groove kind of a voice." (Margaret)
	r3) "It's the questions I wish somebody had asked me when I was a little bit younger and the ability to hear what's not being said." (Nelly).

7.4 Aggregate dimension: Integrate advanced tacit knowledge.

7.4.1 Consolidate new learning	
s) Assign learning into different areas	s1) "I kind of think that I could change in my business and ask what I should do differently. It's also been a reminder of things that I've kind of forgotten along the way." (Margaret)

| | s2) "I've implemented a whole load of procedures and have things in place now that people ask me for it in their businesses, like I had to investigate. I had to come up with solutions, and by learning and putting those solutions in place enables me to now put it in place on my side." (Raymond) |
| | s3) "It's also been a reminder of things that I've kind of forgotten along the way. I love the ability to help and I've also learned from the way they run their business. I kind of think that I could change in my business and what I should do differently." (Margaret) |

t) New-found confidence

t1) "I do a lot of disciplinaries …'cos companies ask me to do that. It's taught me a combination of empathy but at the same time structure in doing a disciplinary, and when you have to dismiss someone." (Raymond)

t2) "I spent a lot of time talking to financial people, reading up on this, being able to talk with some authority and not being scared to say, 'I don't know, but I will go and find out'. So, you're constantly in this learning mode." (Charlene)

t3) "That taking a risk is not always necessarily bad or negative. It can actually be very positive even though you don't know what the outcome might be." (Michael)

7.4.2 Incorporate signalling capabilities

u) Recognise ideal attitudes

u1) "So generally, the ideal mentee is somebody who wants to be mentored. Who wants to say, 'How can this person help me? What can I get from the mentor?'" (Fiona)

u2) "You have to be able to tolerate the unknown, withstand that and still push through no matter what." (Pamela)

u3) "A person who is willing to accept and learn, willing to open up and is willing to work at it, as long as there is intent." (Matthew)

u4) "Open to thinking differently, someone who has agency and is willing to experiment." (Margaret)

v) Recognise self-belief

v1) "People that are inspired to achieve great things are usually the people who would want to go and seek mentorship." (Pamela)

v2) "To be sufficiently bold, to challenge when they don't believe in the process." (Catherine)

v3) "Someone who is outspoken and has a clear vision of what they want or where they are going and then they just go for that." (Brandon)

w) Recognise risk-taker

w1) "Somebody who shows me very early on that they are willing to take a risk, that means they need to change something in their business and see what the result of that is." (Robert)

w2) "Someone who understands the risk associated with not thinking things through." (Edward)

w3) "I think the biggest thing with business is the risk factor, and most people in general fear failure and they fear rejection." (Pamela)

w4) "Simply someone who wants to commit, willing to take the risk of giving up that job, for setting up that business." (Brandon).

x) Recognise the conclusion of the mentoring relationship	x1) "it's very clean cut with our industry if we sit down and the owner of the business says, listen, I think I've got what I've needed from you. Then you know" (Clive). x2) "There comes a time when you are empty of guidance, when I can't give them more" (Edward). x3) "The fact that I couldn't really help in a meaningful way, either from a personal perspective or from a work perspective" (Margaret) x4) "When they start becoming different, no longer interested or I guess there's something wrong" (Brandon). x5) "The relationship ends up losing impetus and the momentum just falls away. He's probably ready to fly on his own. But also, I think for the moment he needs that recognition" (Abigail) x6) "At the end of that, when the institution tells me that the loan has been repaid or the business is succeeding. In theory then I would withdraw from it"(Raymond).

7.2 Personal development

The opportunity to learn new context allowed mentors to look inwardly and imagine ways of improving themselves. It increased their ability to perceive and understand themselves and the new context in a novel manner. The learning for mentors is demonstrated and holds particular significance for new subsequent challenges with the same mentee and/or new mentoring relationships. Most mentors mention how they did not anticipate the magnitude of the learning in their mentoring experience, particularly from a personal development perspective. The experience gave them confidence to broadened their knowledge to offer alternative examples in new relationships illustrated below in *figure 24.*
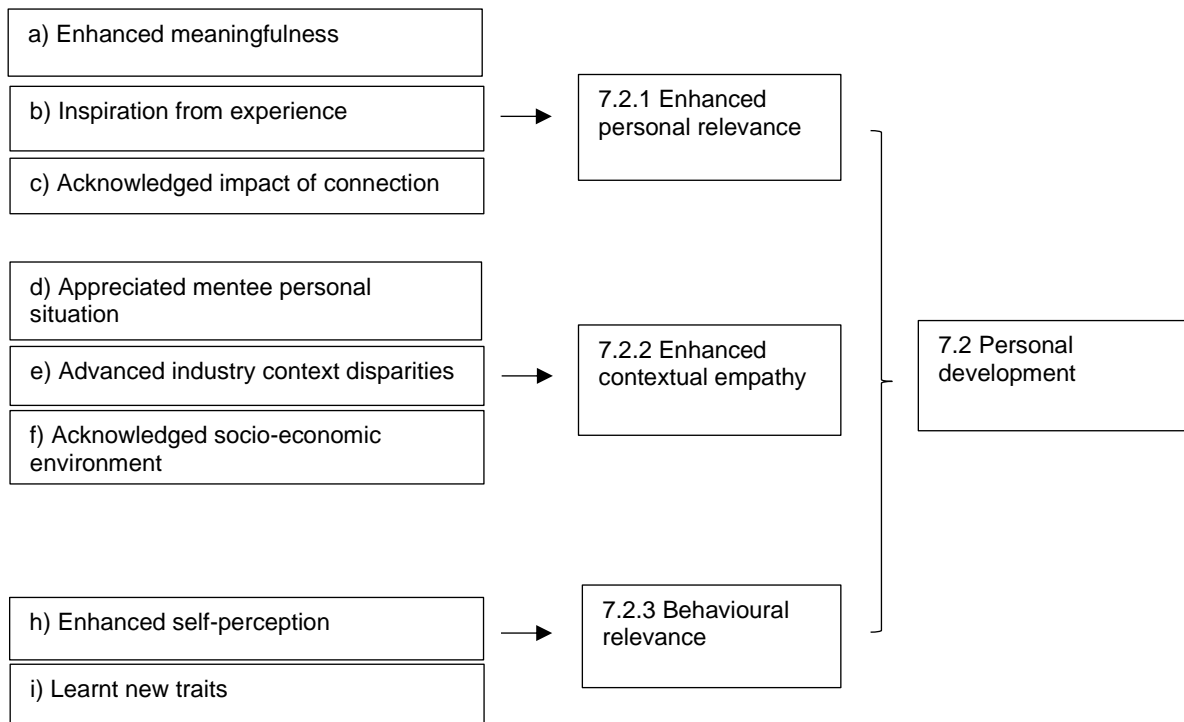

Figure 24: Personal development

7.2.1 Enhanced personal relevance

a) Enhanced meaningfulness

This study found that mentors recognise mentoring as a meaningful and gratifying experience. Mentor expression of their connection to mentoring is profound as they describe how the practice is associated with their "being" and "life purpose" when they

support the well-being of others. The more they mentor, the higher the personal meaningfulness of the knowledge exchange. The personal relevance for mentors also ignited their dedication to the process and their commitment to seeing their mentees progress and prosper. Mentors mention "selflessness" as a description of when they offer their time and expertise, often at no cost. The benefit appears to outweigh the cost of time and energy when the experience is related to their values, beliefs, and purpose. Fiona and Raymond attested to this as follows:

> *It's why I get up in the morning; it's just wonderful to see the personal growth.* (Fiona)

> *I must be honest; it's something that has become an important element of my life. It helps me not only on my personal side, but I also get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people grow and succeed.* (Raymond)

It also appears that while some mentors emphasise the cost incurred of time, skill, and commitment, for volunteer mentors, there was no outright intention to benefit from the dyad. In fact, the degree of benefit was unexpected for one mentor who described a physical response to the mentoring journey: "Wow, I've got goosebumps, an amazing journey. I didn't think when I went into the mentorship agreement that this would be where we would end up" (Michael).

b) Inspiration from experience

The analysis suggests that mentors are motivated and stimulated by the relationship. It was found that observing, understanding, and engaging with their clients' experiences gave them a new perspective rather than relying solely on their experiences and assessments. Witnessing mentee progress aligns with mentor personal goals; it positively and directly impacts them, inspiring their creativity in subsequent situations. For some mentors, the inspiration gave them new-found respect and admiration for the efforts of their clients. Clive described it as an "edifying" experience, gaining a fresh understanding of the capabilities of his clients. Leona agreed and spoke of her "pride" in the progression of her clients. She described a

maternal connection she felt in observing their growth, how she felt encouraged by the experience and its reflection on her growth.

Margaret mentioned being inspired to reflect not only on her proficiency as a mentor but also to revisit unresolved personal traits, as some of her mentee's experiences mirrored hers. Other issues discussed resonated with her sense of discipline and inspired her to review how she conducts her business and achieve specific goals to enhance her future business performance. This is her account:

> *I've also learned and grown from the relationship. I love the ability to help, I've learned from the way they run their business. I kind of think that I could change in my business and ask what I should do differently. It's helped to also connect with some of the issues that came up in a conversation from a personal perspective. I've learned to keep an eye on my finances. I also work from home and can easily be distracted. So, I've also learned to be deliberate when I do the housework, setting aside time for when I do the housework at my business. (Margaret)*

c) Acknowledged impact of connection

This study found that the nature of considering others while engaged in a mentoring relationship reinforces bonds between the mentor and their client. Mentors suggest a social connectedness that goes beyond the classical boundaries of the mentoring relationship. They mention that the connection encourages a more meaningful working relationship between themselves and their mentee. Mentors mention that the emotional connection motivates them to remain committed to helping their mentees succeed. There appears to be a distinction between mentors who experience friendly relations, those who develop long-term friendships and those with no connection.

Matthew related his experience of connectedness and friendship by recognising the interdependent nature of their relationship. He recognised that he learned as much as he taught the mentee. He acknowledged their similar values and the dyadic learning nature of their relationship. He has also learnt to identify changes in the relationship and how to respond, for example, when the relationship becomes "friendly", when their

conversations are less about the business venture and more about personal issues. Margaret concurred with Matthew and acknowledged the link between her friendly relations with her mentees and her motivation to help them, resulting in a shift in attitude to a mutually gratifying relationship.

Raymond, on the other hand, described his recognition of the significance of both friendly relations and long-term relationships with mentees; for him, a connection has become a priority and is paramount to the relationship's success. He described an example of friendly relations that have developed over time into a bond that aligns with his business aspirations and growth. A relationship that began as a mentoring experience ended in respectful admiration for his mentee's skill and capability and has prospects to grow into a business partnership. He attributed their developing friendship as a rare but possible result of a mentoring relationships.

7.2.2 Enhanced contextual empathy

d) Appreciated mentee contextual situation

Mentors were found to learn from, and respect their clients' personal context, whether their clients are opportunity-or-necessity-driven entrepreneurs. However, empathy and the motivation to "give back" are found in the analysis; and are an unexpected personal benefit for some mentors. They recognise an extraordinary need to enhance mentee entrepreneurial skills. Their sense of empathy appears to drive their determination to assist mentees, which positively affects how they view themselves in the long run. This is how Edward understands the tangible benefit: "It gives me energy; therefore, I've got to give something back". Necessity-driven mentees appeared to be a primary concern for mentors to make a social impact. Their tough socio-economic circumstances meant they had ever-challenging contextual situations to deal with, which intervened with their lifestyle. For most mentors, this was a welcome learning opportunity, evoking their compassion and motivation to assist and support their clients.

According to the analysis, some mentors intentionally reach out to mentees from previously disadvantaged backgrounds because of their compassion. Priscilla was

particularly "saddened" by the personal stories of her mentees, which include hardships. Michael reflected on his privilege and difference in upbringing when he acknowledged the motivated attitude of his mentee; he was "humbled by their willingness to try irrespective of their personal circumstances". From observing his mentee's well-being challenges, Michael considered the mentee's background when he felt compelled to intervene with what he termed "soft skills", which would benefit his mentee from a personal and, eventually, a business perspective.

Fiona concurred with Michael. She recalled South Africa's history and how it created a disparity in opportunities and business exposure. She was motivated to support mentees by contributing to their situations to mitigate the historical legacy of Apartheid. For mentors like Fiona, exposure to entrepreneurial role models when growing up is vital in shaping future entrepreneurs and the decisions they make. Leona described herself as "naïve" after discovering the personal challenges of her mentees. She described her experience of learning and understanding of the complexities of being an entrepreneur in the mentee's circumstances.

d) Reconciled contextual disparities

This study found that due to the dynamic nature of mentee contexts, particularly necessity-driven entrepreneurs, mentors gained unique contextual insights from giving entrepreneurial advice, reducing the contextual knowledge gaps. A few mentors described their preference to start a mentoring relationship only in specific industries where they have the expertise. For them it contributes to the efficiency of the advice-giving process due to their prior experience. Industry experience was found to assists in their level of comfort and efficiency. Those who were industry-specific were not as challenged with knowledge disparities as those who mentored mentees from different industries and contexts. Other mentors described the comfort of entering a mentoring relationship with no prior knowledge of their mentee's industry.

Some mentors mention initially relying on their generic entrepreneurial skills and decision-making abilities to manoeuvre through advice-giving and role modelling, but most described learning about new industry norms and challenges through open-mindedly engaging. They often described the level of contextual-related knowledge

required as "building their professional self-confidence" for mentoring and engaging in other mentoring relationships being a positive and yet challenging experience. For some mentors, simultaneously engaging in multiple mentoring relationships makes the experience insightful:

> *It's so varied that it keeps me on my toes and making sure that I have an idea of what is happening in all those industries. I thrive on that; I'm learning new things every day.* (Fiona)

Brandon admitted that advising mentees in varied industries is fast-paced and has advanced his entrepreneurial knowledge in various industries and contexts and taught him "the modern way of doing business". Mentors were found to learn by taking the time to investigate different aspects of their client's industries and the context of their challenges, integrating the knowledge, and making informed decisions when advising. These newly learnt insights enrich subsequent mentoring relationships, accelerating the mentor's ability to positively adapt their response to future mentee problems.

This study found that some mentors tend to give less advice in unfamiliar situations due to the learning required until they find similarities and alignment with their knowledge and experience. This, according to mentors, requires an element of openness to learn and integrate knowledge. Clive, on the other hand, mentioned the rewards of gaining contextual insight into an industry that he considered new and fast-growing. It was an industry perceived to be controversial; however, the insight gained through engaging with his mentee lessened the controversies. Learning from his mentee broadened his mindset and prepared him for other unfamiliar industry interactions.

f) Acknowledge socio-economic environment

Mentors reflect on how the awareness of the socio-economic environment that their clients operate in is important and beneficial. Insight into how mentees manoeuvre socio-economic environments helps mentors by preparing them to provide realistic advice and clarifies the context of challenges faced and the constraints of possible solutions. The sizeable social status gap between most mentors and their mentees is

apparent for mentors. Most mentors have affluent lifestyles and advanced educational backgrounds. They acknowledge how poverty and the country's high unemployment rate have social consequences that affect their mentees. For Edward, learning about these challenges is an empowering experience:

I get to learn about my country. I get to learn about the economy. I get to learn about what's happened in the township and society.

Robert described learning from the influence of socio-economic status on the mindset of entrepreneurs. He acknowledged that due to this environment, most of his mentees have a limited entrepreneurial thought process. Nelly recognised that mentoring is most successful in the context of privilege rather than poverty. She described her privileged access to multiple networks and social capital that allows her to be able to mentor; hence she advises her mentees to engage with her network to move into a more diverse pool of resources.

Edward, on the other hand, recognised the significance and possible impact of mentoring in this environment as a "massive responsibility", particularly if the mentee's business venture is unsuccessful while being mentored. He suggested that in such circumstances, there is a higher level of risk for both parties, in the mentee engaging the advice of a mentor and being influenced by their role modelling who's understanding of their context is limited. He is, therefore motivated to perform the required role with caution, and ensure a positive outcome with contextual disparities in mind. This makes him confident in the quality of advice he can give to reduce business risk to mentees, and instead contribute to their success.

7.2.3 Behavioural relevance

g) Learnt to adapt advising approach

One effect of mentoring for mentors is learning to adapt their advising approach to various new situations. The discontinuous change in the mentees' entrepreneurial environment appears to impact mentor adaptability. Evolving in perspectives and implications of advice appears inevitable for mentors. Mentors mentioned having to

acclimatise as a learning experience. Some adapt "very quickly" (Robert), while others "learn to see the signs and take their time" (Matthew) in responding. This study found that being adaptable aids mentors with interpreting and responding to subsequent mentee situations. The adaptation supports their confidence in advising mentees.

According to some mentors, assigning relevant meaning and giving the correct advice after adapting their habitual approach or thought process is beneficial to their approach to current and future clients. It is equally important to reflect and change direction on decisions made when they realise they have taken an incorrect route. Matthew explains as follows:

> *You learn to see the signs. Sometimes you go down one particular road, and it's not the right road. Yeah, and you have to pivot.*

While adapting to different situations may be an easy task for some mentors, it appeared not so for others. It appeared to be because some mentors rely more heavily on existing experience over a long period. Hence some mentors have learned to establish prospective mentee needs before the commencement of the mentoring relationship and measure the level of adaptation required before committing to the relationship. It appears to give them a sense of comfort to know that most of the time, they can source their advice from current knowledge and avoid a great deal of learning and adaptation to meet mentee expectations and new contexts.

h) Enhanced self-perception

This study found that the mentoring relationship and role modelling in multiple contexts enhanced the mentor's self-perception. The notion of a positive self-perception appears valuable to mentors and assures the mentee of their capabilities. Growth in self-perception is due to mentor adaptability skills, progressive entrepreneurial experience, and improved mentoring approach. For some mentors, keeping abreast of entrepreneurial activity and current affairs becomes a practice that positively influences their self-image and how they present themselves in mentoring relationships. Other mentors' self-perception is enhanced when they feel more

prepared to provide effective advice after learning from researching the challenge/industry and contributing to mentee decision-making.

The confidence in some mentors is said to be evident. On the other hand, while Edward approaches his contribution in an unassuming way and recognises that the effects of mentoring are not always realised immediately and could be associated with success in hindsight, Matthew mentioned his intention and motivation to "leave a legacy" when he mentors. He explained how important it is for him to have a lasting impact on his mentees and their ventures. He spoke in a self-assured manner about the difference he personally makes to his mentees and their businesses and how that motivates him to continue with new mentoring relationships.

Mentors recognise that they are approached for their skill and expertise, advising clients on their needs and what the mentor perceives as essential for the progression of their clients and their ventures. The more experience mentors have, the more some have enhanced self-perceptions, particularly for subsequent mentoring relationships. According to mentors, the multiple interactions with their own enterprises and those of others enhances their confidence as role models. Mentors mention the importance of self-perception in solving mentee problems, it assures their clients. Whilst some mentors were confident in their skill, they were less so in mentoring due to the level of ambiguity of the interaction and process.

i) Learnt new traits

Mentors learned new traits during the mentoring relationship and in response to the changes they experienced. They mentioned the significance of these new traits for their learning and growth. It was emphasised how important it is to remain open-minded throughout the mentoring relationship and to be open to learning. Encountering unfamiliar situations and observing their response supports the mentor's learning and advancement. Some mentors relate their perception of the role, treating the mentoring experience as a process of constantly developing and seeking to understand. Both Matthew and Raymond have learnt to have more empathy from their mentoring experiences.

Raymond mentioned how his skill of conducting disciplinaries is well-known; however, he has learnt to be more compassionate towards people through mentoring. On the other hand, Catherine described her irritations were mirrored by the challenges of mentoring a "frustrated" mentee. She described how it made her aware that she had to "deal with her own frustrations" and taught her to be patient.

7.3 Enhanced entrepreneurial acumen

The notion of developing professionally through enhanced entrepreneurial acumen appears to be prevalent among most respondents. Mentors interviewed in this study mention gaining entrepreneurial insight from facing specialised challenges, encountering new and unknown experiences, and sometimes experiencing "frustration". While most mentors interviewed are experienced in mentoring, enhancing their entrepreneurial acumen through mentoring appeared to depend on their commitment to learning.
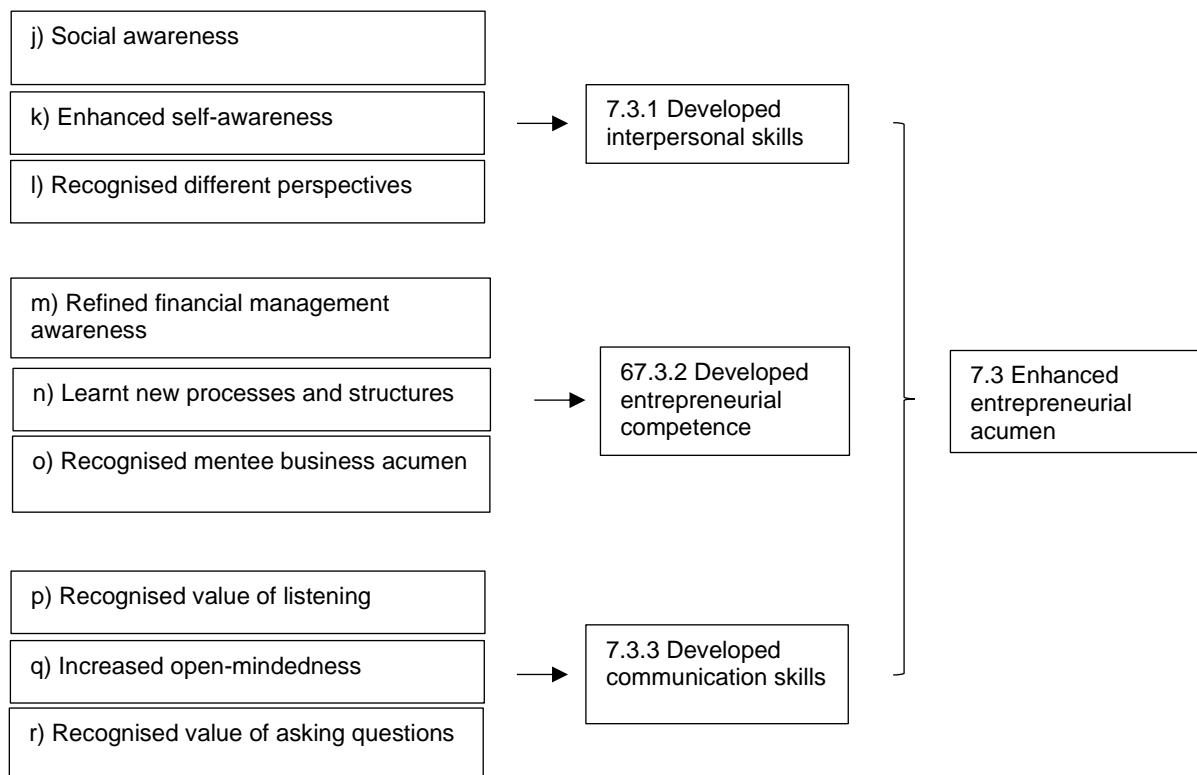

Figure 25: Enhanced entrepreneurial acumen

7.3.1 Developed interpersonal skills

j) social awareness

Mentors recognise that the mentoring relationship can enhance their ability to broaden their perspectives. They described a feeling of fulfilment from witnessing their mentee's development which profoundly impacted how they viewed themselves and influenced their interpretation of their surroundings. Mentors learnt how to create an environment where mentees could demonstrate shifts in their personal development outside of an often-formal business setting.

> *It helps me not only on my personal side. I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing people grow and succeed.* (Raymond)
> *To see somebody actually excel and succeed, their dream has now become a reality, at the end of the day is edifying.* (Clive)
> *The reward for me personally is to see someone fly, for someone to say, 'This has changed my life' has got to be the most impactful thing for me.* (Abigail)

The personal development observed by mentors in their mentees is particularly noticeable to mentors who have coaching qualifications or skills and believe that mentoring an individual from a socio-personal perspective positively affects their impact on their enterprise. They believe that when the mentee is confident in themselves and their ability to control the challenges that have, influences their lives, and their entrepreneurial traits are enhanced.

k) Enhanced self-awareness

This study found that mentoring others can prompt mentors to reflect on themselves and be more aware of their tendencies and interactions with others. Their self-awareness helps them understand the origins of a particular behaviour; if it poses challenges to a mentee's business, it helps with addressing it quickly.

Mentors described situations in the mentoring relationship that prompted them to reflect on themselves when their mentees' behaviour reminded them of their own

behaviour. They recognised the helpfulness of self-awareness particularly the effect that their mentees have on them, it made them more effective leaders and mentors. This self-awareness also prompted Catherine to take a realistic view of their own businesses.

> *It allows you to get to know yourself better. It is edifying if you've got the right match with a mentee, otherwise it can be frustrating if you land up with the wrong pairing.* (Catherine)

Mentors go through a process of introspection and believe mentoring helps to better understand how they respond to different situations. Margaret shared an example of how she recognised "self-doubt" in one of her female mentees and how this affected the mentee's venture. As a result, introspection gave her insight into her own "self-doubt as a female business owner" and helped her find ways to "work through" the realisation. Brandon and Michael agree, Michael mentioned how he noticed that one of his mentees was risk averse. He initially found it challenging to help this mentee to deal with this personal trait. However, upon reflection on his tendency to be risk averse, he was able to address this challenge and found it "an edifying experience".

l) Recognised different perspectives

Mentors expanded their knowledge when they recognised the vast difference in entrepreneurial perspectives concerning skills, values, and beliefs from their mentees. While they start a mentoring relationship with a specific entrepreneurial perspective and confidence to identify challenges and recommend suitable solutions, they mentioned how their diagnosis of a situation often differed from that of their mentees. Sometimes this causes friction in their relationships.

Recognising and respecting this difference in perspective is vital for mentors, they established that their expertise development occurs when they learn from different mentee perspectives. They suggested that learning occurs from curiosity and probing the motivation of certain mentee choices, it encourages the understanding of the basis for varied perspectives on the same challenge. Some mentors mentioned how they have proceeded to apply the alternate perspectives they learned from their mentees

in their own businesses. Margaret mentioned thinking about how she could "do things differently" from a new client perspective. Matthew had a similar view:

I learnt that some people do certain things and apply them in their industries differently. I look at it and go, 'Wow, that's useful.'

Mentors suggested that recognising and seeking to understand their mentees' different perspectives on a challenge initiates collaboration with the mentee on different solutions. However, not all mentors share this view. There appear to be some mentors who prefer to assert themselves as the role model responsible for proposing solutions. Their approach is to impart their entrepreneurial expertise with the expectation that their mentees will adopt their perspective, accept their diagnosis of the challenges faced and implement their recommendations.

7.3.2   Developed entrepreneurial competence

m) Refined financial awareness

The notion that good financial acumen is essential for a successful business is prevalent in the minds of mentors, for themselves and their mentees. Mentors pride themselves on their financial analysis abilities and use this skill (often supported by analysis tools) to determine and diagnose business challenges. However, others view the mentoring relationship as refining their financial awareness, particularly as they mentor in varied contexts and industries. For mentors, inadequate financial understanding appears to be associated with business illiteracy.

Most mentors associated with institutionalised accelerator programmes represented in this study predominantly gain insight into the health of a business through its finances. They mention how their institution is "strict on margins", given that they are financial lenders. Because these mentors view their mentoring through a financial lens, it appears that the variety of mentee industries develops their financial expertise, they advance their ability to "quickly organise [financial] data" (Robert). Margaret agreed with Robert regarding the development of financial understanding and connection to the performance of their mentees' venture:

You have to familiarise yourself with the financials of the company. There were many financial ratios that they had a very superficial understanding of, and I had to tell them why some of their decisions are good decisions and some are bad.

Mentors mentioned how mentees are often creative and highly skilled in developing a product or service in an area outside of finance, which creates a key entrepreneurial disparity. It emphasises the importance for the mentor's financial understanding and insights to provide effective support to their clients. Through mentoring, Margaret's financial skills have developed, she speaks about "keeping an eye on" the financial well-being of her own business.

n) Learnt new processes and structures

Operational inefficiency appears to be a challenge often presented to mentors by their clients at the start of their mentoring relationship. Mentors identified these challenges as having a significant effect on mentee ventures and the response from their external stakeholders. Inefficient processes and structures indirectly affect the operational well-being of their businesses; the efficiency of internal processes, employee processes and the production of goods and/or services. The knowledge that mentors acquire from supporting mentees helps them develop and is used in future decision-making and mentoring relationships.

Mentors mentioned that while assessing the cause of internal processes, structural challenges and seeking solutions, they learnt how specific entrepreneurial approaches can affect employee productivity. They mentioned learning how important it was for employees to know and rely on specific structures and company policies and procedures for their protection. Understanding the process of consequences of certain procedural conducts in the workplace was a noted form of support required of mentors and a learning opportunity due to the unique contexts.

According to mentors, the way some mentees relate to their external stakeholders, particularly suppliers, appears to affect the mentee's business efficiency. Leona assisted her clients with negotiating contracts that supported them in effectively

managing their business. She learnt about the venture impact from unmanaged external stakeholders, particularly in start-ups. Mentors mentioned developing knowledge and skills from observing processes they were particularly curious about in their mentees' operations. Raymond, for example, relays that: "the mentee has helped me in my life tremendously with the process of chicken farming", an area he was previously unfamiliar with.

o) Recognised mentee business acumen

Often, mentees had an accurate analysis of their business challenges and were aware of the solutions required, allowing them to specify their challenges to their mentor. This analysis found that whilst the mentoring relationship invites mentors to role model their business acumen for the benefit of their clients, mentors mentioned how they learnt from the knowledge and progress their mentees made in developing their skills and ambition. They mentioned learning from the application and effect of advice given.

Some mentors mentioned being inspired by the mentee's clear vision and observed inspiring approaches to entrepreneurship. Priscilla recalled a mentee with a high level of business acumen who inspired her, motivating her to continue supporting him with his project; she was eager to help him connect to key stakeholders within her network. As a result, he grew his business and is making a meaningful contribution to society through educational facilities. Similarly, Nelly was inspired by the business acumen and drive of one of her mentees, who required very little concerning role modelling but benefited from Nelly's international network and confirmation of direction.

Brandon mentioned being "challenged to think outside the box" by a mentee. Robert recognised the changes that occur in a field where he has the expertise and recognised the skill and learning possibilities from mentees in updating his experience. Leona benefited from recognising the tenacity of the processes adopted by her clients. Clive's view of caution when role modelling and openness to learning was relayed as follows:

Often you can still learn from them without realising. So, you must just be very wary of moulding them before you actually give them an opportunity to

actually say what they want to do. It doesn't mean that because you are mentoring someone, you are more intelligent or further in life…. you learn and are never too old to learn something new, and obviously, it's their experience.

7.3.3 Developed communication skills

p) Recognised the value of listening

The data suggests that listening is one of a mentor's critical traits and intentions. Mentoring helped them to recognise the value of listening to their clients and assists them in taking the time to make sense of the information provided. Mentors recognised the complexity of some of the challenges conveyed to them and found the skill of attentively listening for understanding helpful in processing the information. They mentioned how isolated their clients can feel as entrepreneurs and how much they appreciate having a "sounding board" for their ideas and concerns.

According to the respondents, active listening positively impacted their clients and ventures. Raymond sees listening as a precondition for building a meaningful relationship and an opportunity to learn how to "correctly advise". Fiona concurs and recognises the benefits she learned from listening; it helps her to "steer her clients in the right direction". She also emphasised that she is a "sounding board" and that attentive listening encourages her clients to make important decisions about the progress of their business.

Michael, on the other hand, used his listening skills to determine whether there was a difference between what the client had concluded as a challenge for their enterprise and what they had identified as the priority area to address. While the client listed the challenges to his business and the areas of support he needed, through actively listening, Michael quickly recognised the difference between what he had heard, and the support mentioned as a priority by the client. Like Michael, Clive takes a cautious approach to active listening in that he believes that listening, observing, and then supporting clients is integral to their success. Some mentors mentioned how they concluded that listening allows their clients to verbalise their challenges which gives

them clarity when they realise what they have communicated. Mentees appreciate the space to explore and make sense of their challenges by verbalising them to mentors who listened attentively.

q) Increased open-mindedness

Being open-minded about a mentee's experience and context throughout the mentoring relationship improved mentor ability to recognise and address a challenge. Open-mindedness appears to improve mentor tolerance of new experiences, foster knowledge creation, and enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. Mentors seem to enter the relationship with a specific structure of interpretation of a successful enterprise. Being open-minded enabled them to accommodate their clients' experiences and enhanced their leadership skills. Often, challenges presented by mentees were said to include elements of unfamiliar revelations.

Some mentors have prior experience with open-mindedness. Clive is intentionally open-minded in approaching mentoring lest he misses an opportunity to learn something new. He attributes some learning to his attitude of accepting the perspectives of his mentees. Matthew mentioned how he deliberately approaches a mentoring relationship with receptiveness to different perspectives:

I just don't limit anybody as I get older. I don't have preconceived ideas of what people can and cannot do because you have no idea. I've been so surprised and impressed by people from very humble circumstances doing phenomenal things.

For Catherine, learning from this approach has enhanced the communication between herself and her mentees. Fiona attributes her learning and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship to her openness to exchanging ideas and creating new knowledge with her clients.

s) Recognised the value of asking questions

Mentors attribute the value of their contribution to their client's decision-making to their ability to ask questions. They recall the benefits of asking exploratory questions to clarify, effectively process information, explore possible solutions, and create new knowledge. They mention how they gain more profound understanding of their clients' situations and how opportunities for action begin to present themselves without laborious effort. Mentors see it as necessary to ask questions of their mentees to gain clarification, even though some mentees may not be forthcoming with providing answers. Edward recalled asking his mentee for their financial records and receiving no response from the mentee. The lack of response made it challenging to mentor his client as he uses financial records to understand mentee venture operations. Robert described how he asks difficult questions and how important it is that he has a certain kind of relationship with his mentee to expect an honest answer.

For mentors, carefully processing information through probing appears essential, particularly at the start of the mentoring relationship. For some mentors, gaining insight from probing determines whether they can commit to the mentoring relationship. Whilst Margaret mentioned how she would only commit to relationships within the scope of her knowledge and capabilities, by questioning her mentees and probing their challenges, she is able to make that decision. On the other hand, asking questions early in the relationship is useful for mentees who, for example, require access to a funding network from mentors; if the mentor has no access and this is not clarified at the start through probing, then the relationship will begin on a problematic note.

Margaret gave an example of how her questioning gives mentees "their voice". She again confirmed and appreciates that they often do not have someone to share their challenges with and believes that asking them questions shows her interest and can lead to meaningful action. Nelly now asks questions she wishes someone could have asked her when she started her business. She mentioned the "ability to hear what is not being said", meaning that she is able to assess her mentee's challenges in an in-depth manner by asking pertinent questions.

7.4 Integrate advanced tacit knowledge

The analysis suggests that mentors integrate their new tacit knowledge into personal, business, and future mentoring relationships because of new contextual knowledge learnt, gaps reduced, and new tacit knowledge created. Their learning from the mentoring experience was also found to advance their analysis structures and bring practical change to their approach when assessing future prospective mentees, as illustrated below in *figure 26.*
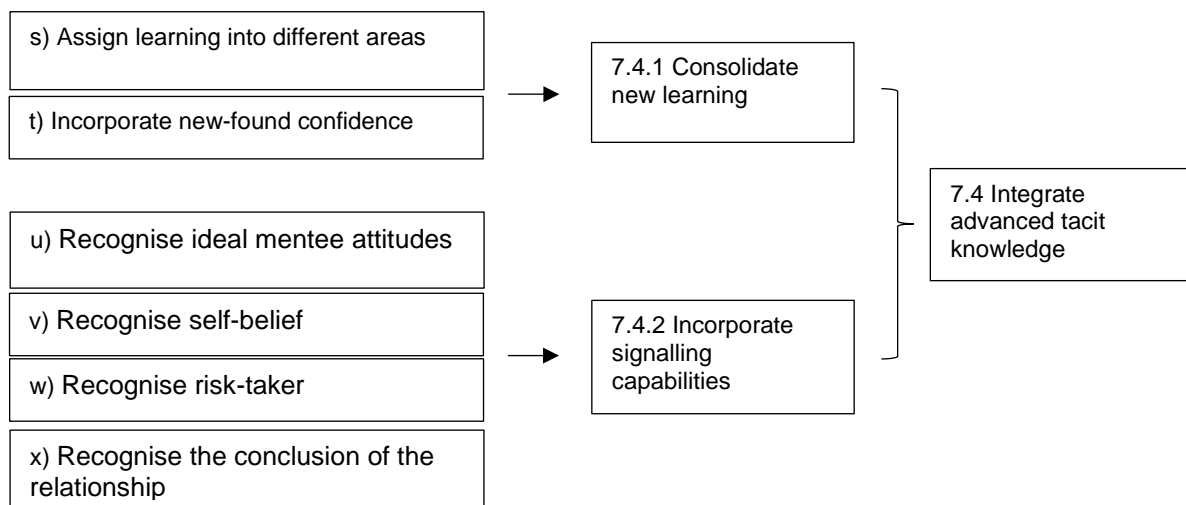
Figure 26: Integrate advanced tacit knowledge

7.4.1   Consolidate new learning

t)   Assign learning into different areas

Mentors recognise that the learning from the mentoring experience can contribute to how they mentor in future. According to Raymond, he has implemented multiple solutions learned from mentoring into subsequent mentoring relationships. He gave the impression that the integration was not based on his initiatives but as a result of the necessity of the practice of mentorship. He explains how his mentorship learning has impacted the operation of a subsequent mentee business.

Margaret reflects on the things she could do differently and relates the following experience of making changes:

I kind of think that I could change in my business and ask what I should do differently. It's also been a reminder of things that I've kind of forgotten along the way. (Margaret)

Edward gave an example of how mentoring "complements his skill set". As a result of mentoring, he used the same skill for an alternative project in a different discipline, out of which he secured new mentees. He described it as a benefit of being part of an "eco-system" of support to entrepreneurs. Abigail spoke of how her skills have improved due to mentoring and mentioned experiencing the effect of the change in both her mentoring capabilities and her personal life.

u) Incorporate new-found confidence

Mentors mentioned how mentoring has improved their ability to undertake goal-focused actions effectively. They described how they had acted on the confidence created by mentoring and adjusted their thinking and actions with new experiences. Michael gave an example of a change in his attitude and taking action in an area he otherwise would not have approached. He described it as a "leap of faith" (Michael) that he took in this area that he had previously avoided.

Charlene described a time when she would cautiously approach finances due to her limited knowledge and how she would depend on her network to support her if her mentees had financial challenges. She now mentions researching financial solutions and being "constantly in learning mode" for subsequent relationships. Leona, on the other hand, reflected on a negative experience she had as a mentee, which gave her confidence in her mentoring approach and taught her how not to mentor. She used what she learned from that experience to guide her approach with new clients. She described her experience as follows:

I was never a fan of having a mentor. I remember one of my mentors was a very, very, very strict; he believed in autocratic-type management. And I learned a lot, but out of that, I learned that autocratic management has its own space and it's very limited so it was good that he mentored me because

I could see the impact. I've learnt to take the bits that worked, and mentor based on the mentee's direction and not my own (Leona)

7.4.2 Incorporate signalling capabilities

v) Recognised ideal mentee attitudes

Mentoring over time equips mentors with the ability to ascertain early positive and negative mannerisms that indicate whether a mentee is ideal or not for mentoring. According to mentors, early attitudes that indicate that the mentee is ready to be mentored are their transparency about their business and openness to accepting support. Detecting these attitudes appears essential to mentors as it provides them with pre-mentoring assurance before committing their time and expertise to a relationship. They mention that with previous relationships, they relied on their intuition to guide them rather than learned signals.

Mentors learn to determine these attitudes within the first few conversations and interactions with prospective mentees. Fiona simply described recognising the ideal mentee as "someone who wants to be mentored". She described their positive and inviting attitude towards their prospective mentor and openness to engagement on any professional topic. She added that for her, another indicator in early conversations is the prospective mentee's certainty of what kind of support they require and their researched knowledge of the capabilities of their prospective mentor.

Pamela described recognising the ability to be agile and "tolerate the unknown" as a learnt indicator of an ideal mentee. She continued to explain how entrepreneurs who can think quickly under different circumstances understand the complexities of entrepreneurship and "still push through no matter what". Similarly, Margaret described the ability to observe entrepreneurs who are open to different perspectives and willing to experiment. Matthew is guided by a prospective mentee's willingness to learn and who can identify their intent and its justification.

w) Recognise mentee self-belief

Mentors suggest that through the experience of mentoring, they can recognise prospective mentees who are confident in their capability to accomplish tasks to achieve the desired performance for their ventures. It appears that while mentors understand that there are certain areas and contexts in which mentees will lack self-belief, hence the requirement for support, there is an element of mentee self-belief that mentors learn to look out for to be confident in the prospective mentee's potential. Priscilla mentions how she is encouraged to mentor mentees who believe in their business' vision, regardless of her perspective on the idea feasibility and the context that the prospective mentee operates. Like Priscilla, Brandon described a mentee's "boldness" and clarity in their vision as signs of mentee self-belief.

> *People that are inspired to achieve great things are usually the people who*
> *would want to go and seek mentorship.* (Priscilla)

Mentors believe that evidence in a prospective client that they are willing to make sacrifices and be resourceful indicates some self-belief. An element of self-investment also appears to be a signal to mentors that mentees are ready to engage in the mentoring relationship. Clive describes his thoughts and experience as follows:

> *…Obviously, some investment in money; if you are a true entrepreneur, you*
> *would actually be resourceful enough to have your money in place before*
> *you actually try to go to market or have the right people in place. An*
> *entrepreneur that thinks they're actually an entrepreneur lasts longer than*
> *six months, and the real entrepreneurs are the ones that actually push*
> *through at least for two years, and then their businesses start growing and*
> *showing potential.*

x) Recognise risk-takers

Mentoring helps mentors to recognise prospective clients who are able to bear some level of business risk. They identify this as an important component of entrepreneurship. While they recognise that becoming an entrepreneur carries an

element of risk, they specifically look for a prospective mentee's ability to bear risks in their decision-making regarding the future. It appears vital for the mentor to detect the type of risks a prospective mentee is prepared to take, risks that are well-qualified and have the potential to contribute to the success of their ventures.

> *Somebody who shows me very early on that they are willing to take a risk, that means they need to change something in their business and see what the result of that is.* (Robert)

Through their experience, mentors recognise the ability of prospective mentee awareness of the risk associated with potential decisions. What is also essential for mentors is the potential level of commitment to possible risk-taking. Brandon mentioned the admiration of prospective mentees willing to risk change in their current situation to fully commit to pursuing entrepreneurship.

Due to their mentoring experiences, mentors are also able to recognise that some mentees are not opportunity-driven entrepreneurs and are therefore more risk-averse. The compassion and empathy of mentors for entrepreneurs who have nothing to risk but everything to gain by becoming entrepreneurs drives mentors to agree to support such entrepreneurs. In such cases, mentors identify their part in the mentoring relationship regarding risk-bearing and recognise that their role is to support the process of risk-taking at different levels for these prospective mentees.

y) Recognise the conclusion of the relationship

According to mentors, recognising the mentoring relationship's conclusion is identified by signals from mentors and mentees, depending on the context. Some mentors realise their capacity has been reached, and they no longer have any new advice to offer. At other times, mentors recognise the signal originating from their clients through a shift in attitude. When mentors recognise the signal, they initiate discussions for the relationship's conclusion and base the dialogue on information clear to both parties. The discussion usually occurs when initial goals have been reached and there is evidence within the operation of the business. Other times, feedback (particularly

when a financial loan has been settled) is shared with the mentor, who confirms what they have also recognised. Some examples are relayed by participants below:

> *It's very clean-cut with our industry if we sit down and the owner of the business says, listen, I think I've got what I needed from you. Then you know.* (Clive)

> *Sometimes where you've got a specific task to undertake, like I mentioned, sometimes an exit strategy around the business, then the signal is clear. At other times, when the institution tells me that the loan has been repaid or the business is succeeding. In theory then, I would withdraw from it.* (Raymond)

Other instances include mentor self-recognition when they believe that they can no longer add value to their clients; for them, that signals that the relationship has ended.

> *There comes a time when you are empty of guidance, when I can't give them more. When you feel there's no more value that you can add. There is no longer any chemistry, and that's what relationships are all about. A good mentor knows when that is.* (Edward)

> *The fact that I couldn't really help in a meaningful way, either from a personal or from a work perspective. Also, If the mentee doesn't ask me to assist them more, then I think that officially our relationship is complete.* (Margaret)

An alternative scenario described by mentors is when the attitude of the mentee shifts from its original state.

> *When they start becoming different, no longer interested or I guess there's something wrong. Also, when you lose contact, then you know that it's coming to an end".* (Brandon)

> *When the relationship ends up losing impetus and the momentum just falls away. He's probably ready to fly on his own. But also, I think for the moment, he needs that recognition, and you can tell when the boundaries are crossed.* (Abigail).

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis in this chapter responds to the third research sub-question. Mentors have elaborated on how learnt context shapes their professional knowledge and mentorship practice. They referred to personal development and enhanced entrepreneurial acumen being shaped as a result of learnt context in their mentorship experience. The themes prevalent in personal development are, 1) enhanced personal relevance, 2) enhanced contextual empathy, and 3) behavioural relevance. Three themes emerge from enhanced entrepreneurial acumen, 1) developed interpersonal skills, 2) developed entrepreneurial competence, and 3) developed communication skills. The outcome of enhanced personal development and entrepreneurial acumen is found to be the integration of advanced tacit knowledge. Two themes were evident in the integration, 1) consolidate new learning and 2) incorporating signalling capabilities. Mentors proceed by sharing the advanced tacit knowledge into various contexts and future mentorship practice. *Figure 27* below illustrates the findings.
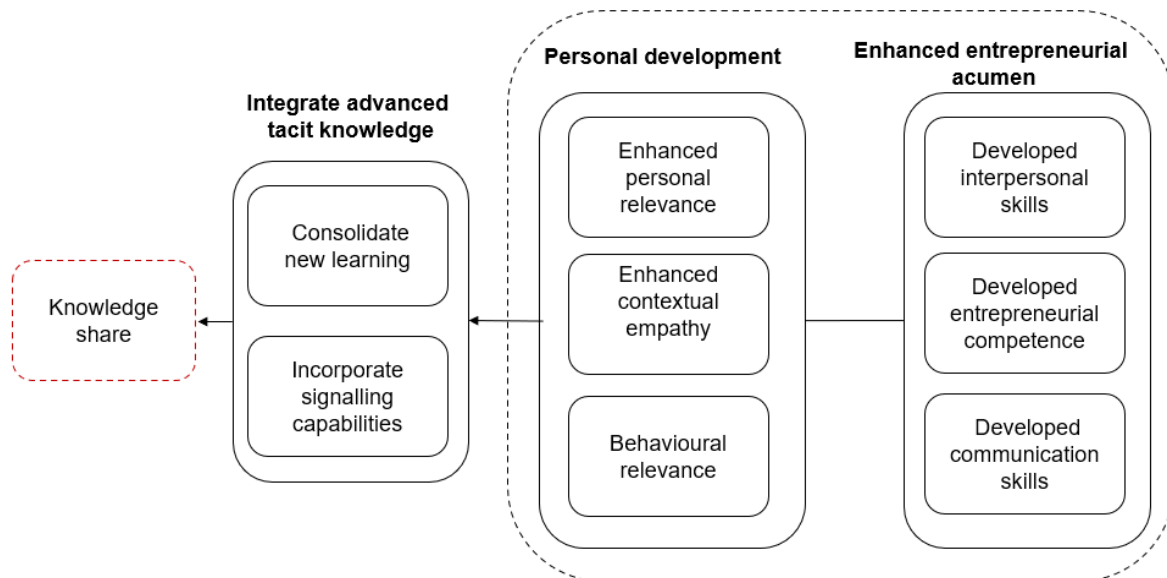

Figure 27: Shaping mentor learning and practice for future relationships

7.6 Consolidated findings

Figure 28 below demonstrates the consolidated findings from all three sub-questions to address the overall research question. It demonstrates that bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst of various forms of entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new mentorship relationship. Further analysis of the collective findings depicts six clear entrepreneurial mentor phases undertaken by mentors as they learn. During early interactions, mentors engage in contextual-related dialogue with mentees The initial contextual-related dialogue with the mentee is the point where mentors encounter the initial contextual knowledge gap. They gain insight, clarity and understanding by using familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experience to *1) conduct a mentee capability assessment.*

The capability assessment diagnoses the state of the enterprise and mentee disposition and supports the mentor's circumstantial learning. However, it often leads to perceived knowledge dissonance and without prior intention, influences mentors to subsequently *2) complete a proficiency self-assessment,* reinforced by an affective response. They complete the self-assessment to gain insight on the required: expertise (what they know) and skill (what they must do); and assess their capabilities and constraints (what they can do) given the mentee's context. The mentor's emotional connectedness with the prospective relationship during their proficiency self-assessment is fundamental in their decision-making. The proficiency self-assessment influences their commitment to, or the rejection of the relationship. This decision is also on the basis of interest, curiosity, commitment and even disinterest or lack of perceived skill alignment.

Once mentors commit to the mentorship relationship, the findings demonstrate how they adapt their existing knowledge to new contextual knowledge, by committing to, initiating, and driving their own learning through various sources. They *3) formulate contextual suppositions, 4) advise and co-create solutions with the mentee and 5) reflect on mentee advice internalisation.* Trust in the sense of assured capability and a demonstration of sincerity between both parties in the dyad is found to be essential

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at this stage of the relationship. Adapting mentor existing knowledge to new contextual knowledge influences the creation of new tacit knowledge.

The opportunity to learn new context encourages mentors to introspect and imagine ways of improving themselves from personal and professional perspectives. New contextual knowledge shapes their personal development and enhances their entrepreneurial acumen. They mention gaining entrepreneurial insight from encountering and undertaking specialised contextual challenges, and openness to unknown experiences. *6) Integration of their advanced tacit knowledge* involves consolidating their new learning and incorporating learnt signalling capabilities into their existing knowledge. Mentors share the new tacit knowledge within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts when opportunities arise.
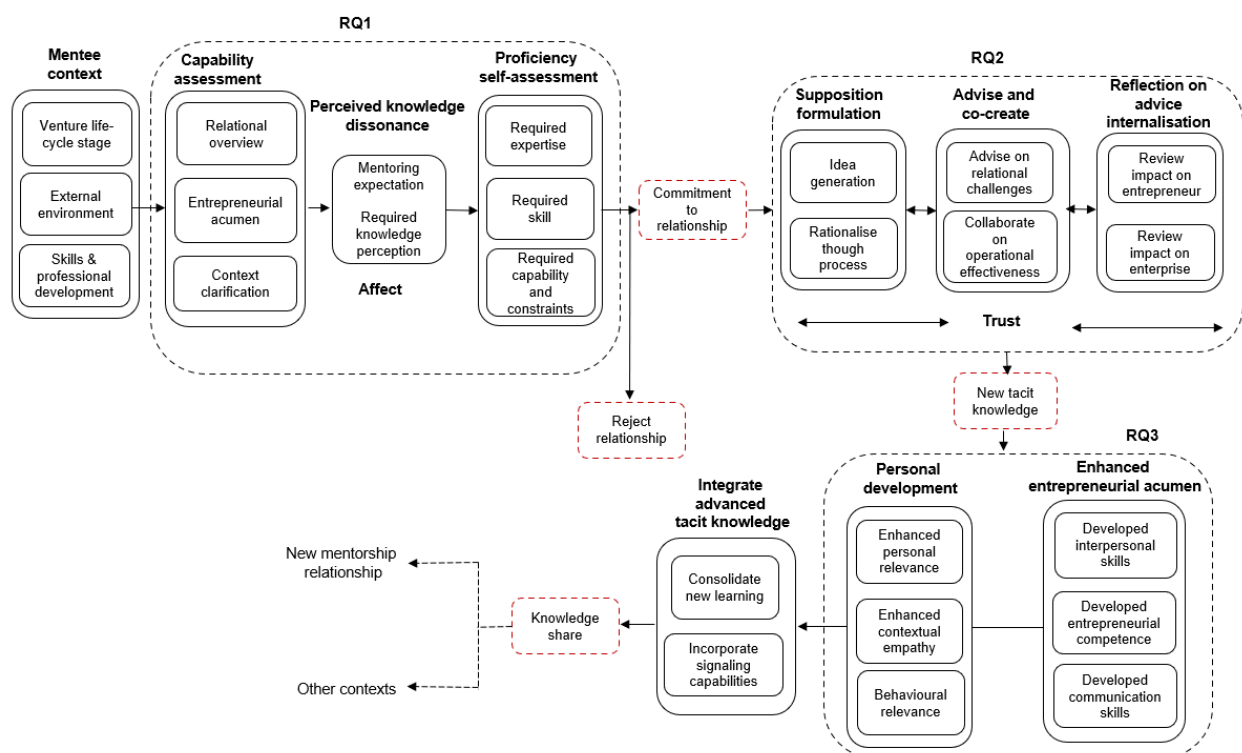

Figure 28: Consolidated findings

Elements of the socio-cultural Ubuntu values, embedded in some South Africans did not influence the entrepreneurial mentoring process. What was prevalent with the participants in this research was mentor professionalism based on skill, experience, and contextual empathy. Confirming Watson's, (2004, p. 61) notion that "prior

experience, skills capabilities, the ability to motivate and support mentees" may inspire the level of learning in the mentorship relationship. It is often assumed that mentoring programmes in South Africa, including within organisations, are premised on Ubuntu. However, as Geber and Keane, (2017) state, there is little knowledge of how an Ubuntu-centred mentoring relationship is conducted.

Challenges associated with mentor and mentee demographic dynamics beyond learning may be present and impactful to mentor overall experience. Whilst the findings in this study did not show any demographic dynamics beyond learning, attention was paid by the researcher to the mentor's experience of the mentorship relationship concerning demographic dynamics, for example, mentor acknowledgement of mentee socio-economic status for example, the contextual empathy (see section 7.2.2, page 202). It contributed to the strengthening of their relationships. South Africa is one of the most "racially and ethnically complex societies in the world", comprising five major ethnic groups (see Afọlayan and Afolayan, 2004) and 11 official languages (see Alexander, 2021). Dimensions like "gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and issues of power" are complex in a mentorship relationship and could influence mentor experience with selection, early engagement, and negotiation within the relationship (see Hansman, 2002, p. 40; and Wanberg, 2003). When gender influences are identified, the value of specific mentorship outcomes will be affected (McKeen and Bujaki, 2007). Additionally, generational differences and mentor expertise could influence overall mentor experience (see Hansman, 2016). The next chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapters 5,6, and 7. It demonstrates the new insights found in this study, expands on the meaning of the findings and integrates them with existing literature.

DISCUSSION

8.1   Introduction

This exploratory study set out to understand the role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new mentorship relationship. The findings reveal that bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal entrepreneurial mentor learning in a new mentorship relationship. Furthermore, a sequence of entrepreneurial mentor phases was found to underpin the mentor informal learning experience. Though unexpected, the phases offer novelty and insight into entrepreneurial mentor experience.   This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapters 5,6, and 7. It demonstrates new insights and expands on the meaning of the findings. It integrates the findings with existing literature.   It reflects how current knowledge is extended and the differences and similarities with existing literature. In this introduction section, the findings are briefly discussed and lead to a conceptual framework. More in depth discussion is found further in the chapter.

The complexity of mentoring is recognised by Ragins and Kram (2007). The combination of bridging contextual knowledge gaps, accomplishing tasks, learning and personal interaction experienced by entrepreneurial mentors adds insight to its complexity and suggests the importance of recognising these elements in mentoring literature. Langdon's, (2017, p. 541) recommendation of further research on how the mentor "moves through a series of convoluted and intricate steps to question the learning experience of a lifetime" suggests that such research would bring insight into the transparency of mentor experience. The six entrepreneurial mentor phases and taxonomy of learning found in this study align with Langdon's (2017) suggestions and are useful for gaining insight into the synergy of the learning process and practice experienced by mentors.

The six entrepreneurial mentor phases: 1) conduct a mentee capability assessment, 2) complete a proficiency self-assessment, 3) formulate contextual suppositions, 4) advise and co-create solutions with the mentee, 5) reflect on mentee advice internalisation and 6) integrate advanced tacit knowledge extend Kram's, (1985, p. 40)

description of organisation-specific mentor practice phases. Kram's phases consist of the following principles: 1) "define the objectives and scope of the project, 2) diagnose the individual and organisational circumstances, 3) implement educational programmes, 4) evaluate the intervention". The most prominent differences between Kram's (1985) phases and those found in this study lie in phases 3 ,4 and 6 in entrepreneurial mentor experience.

Kram's (1983, 1985) posited mentoring process identified in organisational mentoring as involving initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition, and Alred's (1998) exploration, new understanding, and action stages are foundational and have merit in mentorship literature. These stages bring structure to the practice of mentorship and give insight into the process undertaken within the dyad. Similar value is recognised in the process of providing business advice as involving attraction, engagement, exit, and extension outlined by Mole (2021). These principles have been recognised in this study as a broad process outline followed by mentors, they represent procedural interaction in the mentorship relationship.

Understanding the entrepreneurial mentor's experience (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; St-Jean, 2012), and how mentors informally learn (Allen, Poteet and Burroughs, 1997; Eby and Lockwood, 2005) are areas in mentorship literature that were previously unclear. McKimm, Jollie and Hatter, (2007) emphasise how learning is at the heart of the mentoring process, and the importance of mentors understanding their learning process as members of the dyadic relationship. Mentors were found to also consider and learn from sociocultural dynamics throughout the relationship, contrary to critics of Kram's (1985) mentor phases. Dominguez and Hager, (2013) highlight the exclusion of sociocultural complexities in the stages of mentorship. On the other hand, Hay, (1997) suggests a lack of a more transformational viewpoint in Kram's (1983,1985) mentoring research, that focuses on the dyadic relationship between equals and the creation of developmental alliances. Collaboration is demonstrated in the findings of this research, including the impactful changes experienced by mentors. The co-creation of solutions is shown in the 4th phase (advise and co-create solutions) of the identified six phases of entrepreneurial mentor practice, illustrating cohesion and inclusivity in developing enterprise solutions.

The findings in this study identified that entrepreneurial mentors sequentially experience four forms of informal learning in a new mentorship relationship: situated, incidental, self-directed, and integrative learning. Whereas Marsick *et al.,* (2007) suggest that informal learning is typically unstructured. The informal learning taxonomy found in this study contextualises informal learning for entrepreneurial mentors, offering insight and a structured and distinct perspective to the discourse and amalgamation of informal learning classifications. A similar taxonomy of informal learning, referring to varied situations, such as a child, the formal school environment, and social issues, respectively uses intentionality and awareness as distinguishing factors. It is mapped by Schugurensky, (2000) as self-directed, incidental, and socialisation. Bennett, (2012) reconceptualised Schugurensky's (2000) typology by illustrating a four-part model. Socialisation was renamed 'tacit' due to its association with adapting to an often-hidden organisational culture. The inclusion of integrative learning explained the impact of tacit learning on adult learning.

Peeters *et al.,* (2014) partially concurred with both Schugurensky (2000) and Bennett's (2021) conceptualisation of informal learning in education as self-directed, incidental, and tacit learning. Botelho *et al.,* (2021) broadened Bennett's (2012) model of informal learning for angel investors in their support of small businesses, allowing for the adjustable nature across the modalities of tacit learning mentioned by Bennett (2000). The learning opportunities experienced by angel investors were found to be unique due to the complexity of their careers and individual learning styles. Their findings included intentionality and consciousness as elements of the varied forms of learning.

For entrepreneurial mentors, informal learning is driven by bridging contextual knowledge gaps. The findings clarify the opaqueness of the drivers, setting, and underlying experiences (Botelho *et al.,* 2021) of the mentoring process of learning for mentors, suggesting the gravity of the knowledge of mentor learning experience in mentorship literature. Intentionality and consciousness or lack of in mentor informal learning, were identified and noted as key elements in the integration of the informal learning taxonomy with existing literature. Schugurensky (2000); Botelho, Harrison and Mason, (2021, p. 5) concur and note "intentionality and consciousness or awareness", as associated with the mentor's informal learning experience.

Furthermore, Stonehouse and Pemberton (1999, p. 135) weigh the difference between learning and knowledge from an organisational learning perspective and suggest that learning is an "active process" involving a "conscious effort to develop", they assert that "learning is a diligent process". Their assertions are not entirely supported by the findings in this study, due to the unintentional and incidental learning found in some forms of entrepreneurial mentor learning experience, also identified by Cerasoli *et al.,* (2018) and Marsick and Watkins, (2001). A few other scholars (Tannenbaum et al., 2009; Noe, Tews and Marand, 2013; Cerasoli *et al.,* 2018) have noted the restrictive nature of intentionality and consciousness in informal learning.

Entrepreneurial mentors have the opportunity to learn about the mentee's business context. Contextual learning from mentees is stated by Clancey, (1995). Literature is extended through the findings in this study, bridging contextual knowledge gaps is identified as a catalyst for informal learning. The extent to which new context affects the quality of mentoring delivered by mentors is also reflected in the findings, and noted by Allen, (2007). Furthermore, mentors demonstrate the significance of context and building their professional development. The informal learning taxonomy identified in this research expands insight into how mentors "learn about themselves and how they adapt their practice to develop their mentoring expertise" (Langdon, 2017, p. 528). It illustrates the significance of new context in mentor learning and extends current conclusions that mentors learn during the mentorship relationships.

The next section shows the conceptual framework in figure 29. It integrates the consolidated findings in chapters 5,6 and 7 (see section 7.6, page 224) with existing literature. The framework explains the demonstrates the catalyst role that bridging contextual knowledge gaps play in entrepreneurial mentor informal learning in a new mentorship relationship, six entrepreneurial mentor phases, and how mentors "learn about themselves, and adapt their practice to develop their mentoring expertise" (Langdon, 2017, p. 528).

8.1.1 Mentoring phases and a taxonomy of informal mentor learning

The conceptual framework below integrates ordinated learning and practice constructs and concepts. It emerged inductively as the findings (section 7.6, page 224) were interpreted and integrated with existing literature to create insight into the entrepreneurial mentor's experience. It accentuates the legitimacy and value proposition of mentorship for mentors as a practice guideline, a form of understanding their knowledge acquisition (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 2010, p. 2), and advancing their entrepreneurial acumen. The explanation of the framework draws attention to bridging contextual gaps as a fundamental influence of mentor learning in a new entrepreneurial mentorship relationship, it includes specified forms of learning and outcomes, underpinned by six entrepreneurial mentor phases.
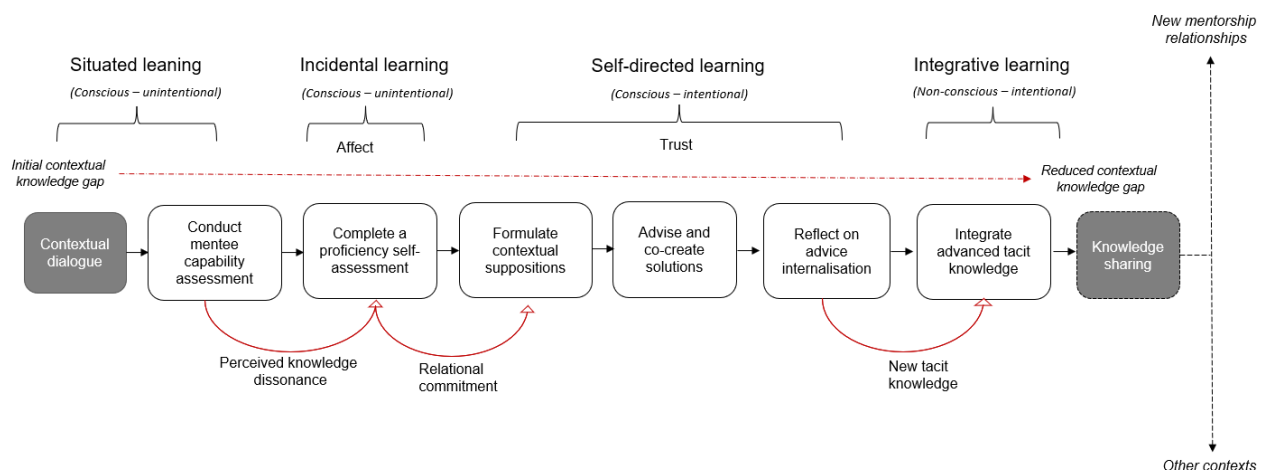
Figure 29: Mentoring phases and a taxonomy of informal mentor learning.

Contextual-related dialogue in early interactions with the mentee is the point where mentors encounter the initial contextual knowledge. To gain insight, clarity and understanding of the new context, mentors conduct a mentee capability assessment (phase 1). They use familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experiences. This conscious and unintentional clarification of the mentee's circumstances conducted by the mentor can be described as *situated learning* (see Lave and Wenger 1999), that is, learning linked to activity and context, not absorbed in the abstract, but related to prior knowledge, beliefs, biases and fears (Hein, 1991).

It is at this phase that mentors encounter initial contextual knowledge gaps. They commonly identify a difference in their existing knowledge, and the required knowledge to mentor the client. Influenced by perceived knowledge dissonance, mentors are found to introspect and complete a proficiency self-assessment (phase 2) reinforced by an affective response. They evaluate their competencies, that is, their existing professional expertise (what they know), skill (what they must do), and capabilities and constraints (what they can do) in relation to the perceived required knowledge. A conscious and yet unintentional form of learning experienced through the self-assessment is outlined by Marsick and Watkins, (2001) as *incidental learning.* Incidental learning enhances "critical reflection to surface tacit knowledge and beliefs" (p. 30). It influences the mentor's decision-making regarding the continuation of the relationship, which often includes actively identifying their stance. Based on their personal and/or professional connection with the new context, they consider their ability and willingness to learn new competencies to reduce the knowledge gap and assist the mentee in implementing their outlined objectives.

The outcome of the affective and introspective self-assessment informs mentor decision to either commit to or reject the mentoring relationship. Mentors often proceed with relatable relationships, where they consider themselves as professionally proficient in tackling challenges posed by the mentee and their context. They often commit when they feel connected to the idea of the relationship and are prepared to learn from the experience. Relational commitment encourages the decision to engage in learning to support the mentee. Intentional, conscious and purpose-driven learning is described by Schugurensky, (2000) as *self-directed learning.* Similarly, mentors take the initiative to identify their learning needs and required resources and modify their existing knowledge to achieve the relationship objectives.

Self-directed learning is perceived as valuable to mentors as they choose and implement learning strategies relatable to them. It is at this stage where mentors formulate contextual suppositions (phase 3) based on new contextual knowledge, advice is offered, and solutions are co-created with the mentee (phase 4). Mentors reflect on how mentees internalise advice (phase 5) given, which they learn from as it resets their existing knowledge. This phase is also known as the cultivation stage (Kram, 1983) in organisational mentoring. Trust in the authenticity of the relationship

is considered key to the relationship's success. The contextual knowledge gap lessens as the relationship progresses, and mentors continue to learn. The effect of learning, adaptation, collaboration, and reflection is likened with the creation of new tacit knowledge identified by Nonaka (1994).

Learning from bridging new contextual knowledge gaps influences the mentor's personal development and enhances their entrepreneurial acumen. Mentors integrate their advanced tacit knowledge (phase 6). They share the new tacit knowledge within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts when opportunities arise. Incorporating lessons learned in one situation to address challenges in a different context illustrates *integrative learning,* a non-conscious and intentional form of learning (Miller, 2005). To reinvest the advanced tacit knowledge into future relationships, mentors would adjust existing interpretive frames to process new knowledge and perceptions of new situations (Bennett, 2012). They would gain the "ability to make, recognise, and evaluate connections between different concepts, fields, or contexts" (Huber *et al.*, 2007, p. 46) and incorporate them in recognisable stages (Leonard, 2012) within new and existing mentorship relationships and other contexts where the knowledge is transferrable.

The implications of these findings are significant for mentorship theory and practice, offering new insight and elaboration to structure, guidance and highlighting bridging contextual knowledge gaps as a driver of different forms of entrepreneurial mentor learning. Kram, (1985) states that potential mentors could be opposed to mentoring due to the lack of practical guidance or the experience of being mentored. Mentor resistance could also stem from being result orientated, overriding interest in people development objectives. Additionally, planning in formal mentorship programmes is often too simplistic with the use of "non-specific friendship models of mentoring" (Stoeger, Balestrini and Ziegler, 2021, p. 8). Whereas mentoring should involve "conversation, discussion and dialogue, where the mentor engages in a reciprocal exchange of ideas and joint construction of knowledge with the mentee" (Ellis, Alonzo and Nguyen, 2020, p. 3) These findings uphold that mentorship is indeed dynamic and rewarding for mentors and occurs while mentors enact multiple tasks.

The following section expands on findings in this study and includes the key themes that emerged. The six entrepreneurial mentoring phases and the taxonomy of informal learning are further integrated with existing literature.

8.2   Situated learning

Two broad themes emerged from the findings that support the association of situated learning and entrepreneurial mentoring: contextual dialogue and mentors conducting a mentee capability assessment *(phase 1).* Mentors initially have little knowledge of the mentee's circumstances, their goals, and the required business support until they are presented with new contextual information. Situated learning is characterised as circumstantial, in social affairs and in context. Cobb and Bowers, (1999) depict this form of learning for mentors as required to gain clarity about the intended mentee's goals and to define the real issues experienced by mentees. Additionally, the "legitimate peripheral participation" of situated learning stated by Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29), describes an invitation from mentees for mentors to move from a peripheral position toward complete contextual participation in the knowledge of their enterprises.

The level of contextual ambiguity experienced by mentors varies depending on their experience. Whilst at first encounter, mentors experience an unclear situation, it comes as no surprise to them. Tolerance of any ambiguity is context-specific (Durrheim and Foster, 1997) it requires a specific demeanour, level of processing, openness to learning and understanding as both parties begin dialogue towards a possible relationship. Also needed is a certain level of broad-mindedness and the ability not to respond prematurely, but to view the condition with positive possibilities (Whitaker, Thatchenkery and Godwin, 2020). Often what is presented as a need by clients differs from what the professional perceives as a need (Turner, 1982), hence the significance of effective engagement in contextual dialogue with the mentee and the application of a mentee capability assessment to gain insight is justified during this initial stage.

8.2.1 Contextual dialogue

While context is typically unique to each mentee, it is central to the relationship. The predominant themes found as discussion points in early mentoring interactions were 1) the stage of the mentee's venture life cycle, 2) their external environment and 3) the mentee's skills and professional development needs. These themes correlate with entrepreneurial context dimensions indicated by Wright and Stigliani (2013); Pendergast (2003); Welter, (2011); Autio *et al.,* (2014); Lin *et al.,* (2015). In addition, the contextual dimensions and dynamics found in this study are in congruence with Autio *et al.,'s* (2014, p. 1099) assertion that entrepreneurial context plays a central role in our appreciation of the "origins, forms, micro-processes, functioning and diverse outcomes of entrepreneurial activity". The richness of the entrepreneurial phenomenon is indeed found in understanding the context (Welter, 2011; Zahra, Wright and Abdelgawad, 2014; Pasillas, Brundin and Markowska, 2017) and is the foundation of entrepreneurial mentoring.

Situated learning is a bridge between practice and learning (Lave and Wenger, 1999) in entrepreneurial mentorship. The notion builds on the work of scholars who have focused on the influence of context on learning (Morimoto, 1973; Figueiredo, 2006; Balsam and Tomie, 2014). Figueiredo (2006) examined context in learning from a philosophical perspective, noting that context, from a constructivist perspective, "cannot be located or delimited" and is instead "perceived through its interactions with the learner" (p. 12). Context is viewed as exogenous and interdependent of the learner and any activities engaged; it describes the environment created where the activities occur. Learning occurs in the context of previous knowledge and is defined by time and other elements of the task (Balsam et al. 2014). Among other benefits, the initial learning experienced by mentors prompts action towards decisions based on their new understanding. As mentors engage in dialogue, they unintentionally search for relatedness to the mentee and their context, it leads them to a curiosity for further insight through a mentee capability assessment.

8.2.2 Mentee capability assessment (phase 1)

To gain insight, clarity and understanding of the new context, mentors conduct a mentee capability assessment. They use familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experiences. The themes identified as contributing to mentor insight are 1) a mentee relational overview, 2) assessing mentee entrepreneurship acumen, and 3) context clarification. This information on the enterprise and entrepreneur's capabilities gives mentors insight into key information they may not know, and clarifies the entrepreneurial context presented in a familiar format.

P1: To gain insight, clarity and understanding of the new context, mentors conduct a mentee capability assessment and use familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experiences.

Hussey, (2002) describes a similar assessment as an "analytical approach to a SWOT analysis that divides the company appraisal into an external and internal element, but in reality, both have to be interpreted in the context of each other" (p. 47). This form of capability assessment aligns with Carey and Tanewski's, (2016) description, it is an approach for understanding, a combination of cognitive, behavioural and environmental perspectives. What a capability assessment can achieve is a framework that recognises gaps and "drivers of long-term firm survival and growth" (Baía and Ferreira, 2019, p. 1).

There appears to be no pressure on the mentor to respond during this fact-finding stage; instead, they explore what is being presented bearing in mind what they know. When there is a perceived significant contrast between what they know and what is presented, it influences a situated learning opportunity, an invitation to gain understanding. Brown *et al.,* (1989) view situated learning as a form of supporting learners in acquiring, developing, and using cognitive tools in valid contextual activity. The findings in this study suggest that mentors engage a similar approach. The emphasis is that specific factors need to be known and understood, with insight on how they should be addressed (Zack, 1999). Typically, a knowledge gap identification

process is completed to establish a firm's competitive knowledge position; this offsets the firm's strategic capabilities against its obligations (Zack, 1999; Qi, 2020).

By assessing mentee capabilities and responding to the mentee's invitation to participate in their entrepreneurial circumstance, what begins to emerge at this early stage of the prospective relationship, are gaps in mentor contextual knowledge and competencies. Depending on the extent of the gaps, this challenges their perception of their position as 'experts'. Orland-Barak and Yinon, (2005) highlight that it is not uncommon for mentors to be confronted with a gap in their understanding, although at a later stage while mentoring a client. They affirm the assertion that the experience of knowledge dissonance can lead mentors to question their professionalism and ability to continue mentoring effectively. Afterall, experts are differentiated based on their competence, expertise, and experience (Hur, Ruttan and Shea, 2020). On the other hand, Adams (1965) suggests that in these early conversations, the advisor could also be perceived by their client as stern and continually seeking recognition and relevance as the professional by conducting a capability assessment.

8.2.3 Perceived knowledge dissonance

Following the mentee capability assessment and the emergence of mentor knowledge gaps, this study finds that mentors perceive a dissonance between the required knowledge and mentoring expectations. This study's findings align with Kram's (1983) view that dissonance occurs in the initiation phase of organisational mentoring. Recognising dissonance is found to lead to discomfort or tension, again, the weighting of perceived dissonance may vary based on mentor experience. While this is also found in educational mentors by Orland-Barak and Yinon, (2005), the task for entrepreneurial mentors is identifying what it entails to close the gaps. At this stage, mentors also content with a possible disparity in the mentee's perception of their enterprise circumstances and capabilities versus reality, leading to tacit improvisations in trying to close knowledge gaps (Brown and Duguid, 2000). Recognition of dissonance is a reminder, according to Orland-Barak and Yinon, (2005), that expertise and experience are not always in alignment. "Mentor perspectives of critical incidents in different contexts position them sometimes as novices and sometimes as experts" (p. 573).

Dissonance occurs when types of knowledge do not align; consonance is when they do. Pressure is felt to reduce the dissonance based on its magnitude. Resistance or motivation to change the level of dissonance depends on the importance of the knowledge required and the extent of the benefit or loss to the individual (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019). While the introduction of cognitive dissonance was initiated in social psychology, management research has adopted the concept for gaining insight into various significant areas like organisational behaviours (Hinojosa *et al.*, 2017), marketing perspectives (Telci, Maden and Kantur, 2011; Sharma, 2014) and insight into mutual fund investors (Goetzmann and Peles, 1997). Dissonance, the non-aligned contextual knowledge regarding the environment, one's self, or one's behaviour (Festinger, 1957), encourages action as shown in the findings. Festinger's, (1957, p. 3) highlights the "existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, it will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person actively avoids situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance". Terms such as discrepancy among cognitions and psychological discomfort are also used by Festinger (1957) to elaborate on dissonance. However, similar to mentor experience, its enormity depends on the context's significance to the individual (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019).

In the examination of properties associated with adult learners, and implied in this study, Merriam (2001) notes two relevant properties to this discussion of dissonance. They describe how the learner is: 1) "problem-centred, interested in immediate application of knowledge, and 2) motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors" (p. 5). Thus, mentors were found to promptly use existing tools to assess mentees which revealed perceived knowledge dissonance. Merriam continues by implying that adult learners are problem-based learners. When exposed to new situations, they initially connect the circumstance to their existing knowledge, rather than try to understand the meaning of the external factors. They also describe adult learners as having "an independent self-concept" and the ability to facilitate their learning (p. 5). This description relates for mentors as a response to recognising dissonance.

In a review of cognitive dissonance, Harmon-Jones and Mills, (2019) suggest a concern of previous researchers regarding little knowledge of the response of individuals after dissonance, and the effect of the revelation of information that contrasts with former knowledge. However, researchers concur that as an outcome of cognitive dissonance, individuals experience a cognitive change, meaning that cognitive dissonance motivates cognitive alteration. What is also established is that "the cognitive changes are motivated in nature and that the source of this motivation is a form of psychological discomfort" (p. 17).

The response and enactment of entrepreneurial mentors after perceiving dissonance concur with Harmon-Jones and Mills' (2019) assertions. The source of mentor perceived dissonance is motivated by the mentee capability assessment and causes discomfort. This insight specifies and expands their view of the entrepreneurial mentor's experience and response to dissonance. The findings in this study also align with Eys and Carron, (2001) and Hepler and Chase's, (2008) assertion, stating that after experiencing cognitive dissonance, individuals often begin to reflect and assess how their contribution will be considered, and the ramifications of their failure to add value.

This stage appears significant for mentors, and a more complex one at that. As they recognise the discomfort, it becomes crucial in the making of an efficacy-based choice, which in this context, prompts an unintentional and yet conscious proficiency self-assessment, associated with incidental learning.

P2: Upon realising a disparity in contextual knowledge, specifically the gap between the required knowledge and mentoring expectations, entrepreneurial mentors experience a sense of discomfort that influences them to complete a proficiency self-assessment.

8.3   Incidental learning

The key theme that emerged from the findings as an action taken by mentors is the completion of a proficiency self-assessment *(phase 2)*, reinforced by an affective response. At this stage of the entrepreneurial mentorship relationship, mentors

unintentionally introspect, which exposes their existing knowledge and learning needs. This links incidental learning to entrepreneurial mentoring. Watkins and Marsick, (2021, p. 30) suggest that no external facilitation or structure is required for incidental learning to occur. "Critical reflection surfaces tacit knowledge and beliefs, and the learner proactively detects options to implement solutions, creativity encourages a wider range of solutions". This finding adds an explanation to the incidental learning experienced by mentors and suggests that these elements are a key part of their introspection for incidental learning to take place. The shift by entrepreneurial mentors to proficiency related introspection found in this study differs with Langdon's, (2017, p. 541) findings on teachers as mentors. In their research, mentors "found it hard to turn a critical gaze at themselves in the identification of their learning needs".

Watkins and Marsick's (1992) assert that incidental learning is closely aligned with individual belief systems, they confirm that it is informal and unintentional, there is awareness that learning is occurring. Incidental learning does not occur due to oversight but is driven by the "incorporation of meaning" (p. 291). Mentors find meaning for themselves from previous activities, that is, the mentee capability assessment. This form of informal learning has been found to be superior to intentional learning. Intentional learning may be applicable for recall, whereas incidental learning is more effective for recognition (Eagle, 1964).

8.3.1 Proficiency self-assessment (phase 2)

Influenced by perceived knowledge dissonance, mentors are found to introspect and complete a proficiency self-assessment. They internalise the significance of the learnt new context and reflect on their capability boundaries. They complete a proficiency knowledge assessment based on three themes: 1) required expertise (what they know), 2) required skill (what they must do), and 3) their capability and constraints (what they can do) concerning their prospective role. Watkins and Warsick (2021) state that incidental learning is an 'in-moment learning' that arises as gaps need to be addressed when identified. It is associated with learning when the primary purpose is to solve a problem. To ensure effective incidental learning, reflection is key, as it allows the learner to uncover assumptions and errors, and identify unintended adverse outcomes (Marsick, Watkins and Scully-Russ, 2017). The self-assessment highlights

that the recognition of contextual knowledge disparity challenges their expertise and can motivate or demotivate their interest in the mentorship relationship. The findings align with Wyre, Gaudet and McNeese's (2016) suggestion that self-assessment reduces uncertainty and fear of potential conflict.

Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) suggest that required expertise, such as that assessed by mentors relates to what the mentor already knows and can be leveraged based on the structure and objectives of a task. It is associated with information about goal setting, and modifying responses based on a shift in task conditions. Where experts are concerned, "specificity of performance is evidenced by the disruption of proficiency" when unexpected situations are presented (Glaser, 2005). The explanation of skill requirement as stated by Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983) is concerned with executing tasks aligned with goals and is the difference between procedures and procedural knowledge. Knowing what they can do, refers to mentor capabilities and constraints given their pre-scheduled commitments, and the boundaries to be created when considering whether they should proceed with the mentoring relationship. Know-that and know-how covers the knowledge required for performance, and does not include know-when and know-where, which is conditional knowledge as stated by Paris, Lipson and Wixson (1983).

8.3.1.1 Affect-based proficiency self-assessment

Further explanation is added to the entrepreneurial mentor's proficiency self-assessment by suggesting that it is an affective experience for mentors. Mentors mention an emotional link with the proficiency self-assessment as they consider their capabilities. Affect, is associated with reactivity to a stressful situation and relationships are frequently formed or transformed through an individual's experience of affect (Chida and Hamer, 2008). While affect can be viewed as intuitive, it is often a positive contributing factor to relational interaction. Conversely, it can have a recoiling effect and produce negative outcomes (Floyd, 2006). An individual with positive affect is curious, enthusiastic, confident, and attentive. Whereas some traits of the opposite, negative affect are adverse emotions, fear and guilt (Watson and Naragon-Gainey, 2010).

According to the respondents in this study, the mentor's emotional connectedness with the prospective mentee and their venture during their self-assessment process is fundamental. The connection between stimulated creativity, ideas and social connections (Fredrickson, 2004) is key as they consider commitment to the relationship. Fredrickson (2004) affirms that connection broadens one's brief thought-action range, understanding, and is a key driver of decision-making. The affective assessment also contributes to whether mentors can professionally relate to the context presented. As affect impacts choices to "focus on the positive influences" (Hemenover, 2001), a connection for mentors could be positive or negative. Whitaker *et al.,* (2020) suggest that positive affect can impact the selection of positive features when faced with a stressful situation. On the other hand, the implications of negative affect should also be considered. It could be influenced by the entrepreneur as an individual and/or the business enterprise's challenge/opportunity or both.

This study also found that the affect-based proficiency self-assessment may obstruct any initial possibility of mentors applying "*Ubuntu*" values or their altruistic intentions by replacing them with their professional and skills-based stance. A different point of view is suggested with organisational mentors. According to Kram (1983), in the initiation stage, an organisational mentor views their protégé as "coachable" and receptive to their world perspective. The completion of an affect-based proficiency self-assessment by entrepreneurial mentors concurs with Watkins and Marsick, (1992, p. 291) suggestion that in incidental learning, when individuals "stumble on something extraneous to the task in which they are engaged, they must consciously pursue the discovery to learn from it, instead of moving ahead with the task at hand". Mentor experience expands our contextual insight by linking their affective response to perceived knowledge dissonance.

Once mentors complete the affect-based self-assessment and feel connected to, and are interested in pursuing the relationship, they communicate their commitment to mentees. The commitment is also influenced, in some instances, by the combination of belief in their proficiency and mentee contextual empathy. In other instances, to socio-cultural influences; and in the context of this thesis, the recognition of the effect of South African historical impacts. The latter of the findings align with Batson's (1990) suggestion that humans are capable of caring for others for others' sake, setting aside

one's benefits. They elaborate on how individuals are more likely to help each other when they have empathy. If no bond exists, mentors reject or discontinue the relationship, often resulting in a referral to other mentors or experts relevant to the mentee's objectives.

8.3.2 Relational commitment

When mentors are optimistically challenged or curious about the mentee's context, and are not dissuaded by any surrounding contextual ambiguity, they are encouraged to commit to the relationship, regardless of the contextual knowledge gap.

P3a: When mentors approach mentee challenges with optimism and curiosity, and are not deterred by contextual ambiguity, they are encouraged to fully commit to the relationship, regardless of any contextual knowledge gaps.

When mentors are pessimistic in their approach towards new context, they are deterred by the contextual ambiguity and reject or refer the mentorship relationship. Acceptance ignites self-esteem, confidence and well-being, while rejection leads to disassociation and negativity (Buckley, Winkel and Leary, 2004).

P3b: When mentors approach challenges with pessimism towards new context, they are deterred by the contextual ambiguity and reject or refer the mentorship relationship.

These findings contrast the assertion by Olivero, 2014, (p. 60) that most resistance in a mentorship relationship develops from fear from the mentee of a new experience. They instead address resistance from a mentor's perspective. From the advisor's perspective, relational commitment is fundamental for delivering advice (Bennett and Robson, 2005). When an individual "realises, maintains, discontinues or avoids particular behaviour, conscious or unconscious", they are not motivated to learn further from the situation (Straka, 2009, p. 134) as has been found with mentors who do not commit to continuing with the mentorship relationship.

When affect is associated with commitment it describes a sense of connection and the appropriateness of a relationship. Conversely, normative commitment refers to a sense of obligation to contribute to developing culture due to shared values and goals. Continuance commitment refers to the need of an individual to remain in a situation, due to pure obligation (Meyer, Allen and Gellatly, 1990). In this study the findings demonstrate both affective and normative commitment, continuous commitment is an intriguing perspective to be considered for future research. Once mentors commit to the relationship, they also commit to reducing the contextual knowledge gap.

8.4   Self-directed learning

Firm commitment to the relationship indicates that mentorship commences for the entrepreneurial mentor. It is at this stage where mentors formulate contextual suppositions (phase 3) based on new contextual knowledge, advice is offered, and solutions are co-created with the mentee (phase 4). Mentors reflect on how mentees internalise advice (phase 5) given, which they learn from as it resets their existing knowledge. They become more actively engaged and in take the initiative for their learning requirements. This links self-directed learning with entrepreneurial mentorship. This conscious and intentional learning process begins once the skills and knowledge needed have been identified (Oddi, 1987).

This stage in the mentorship process is described as the cultivation stage (Kram, 1983) found in organisational mentoring, or the engagement stage in small business advice (Mole, 2021). The cultivation stage involves exploring, advising, adjusting perceptions, learning, and strengthening trust. During this stage this study found that mentors actively engage with the mentee and their context. It is an opportunity for them to modify their existing knowledge with new context through the task-specific, intentional and conscious self-directed learning described by Schugurensky, (2000); Bennett, (2012); and Botelho, Harrison and Mason, (2021). Mentors mention how they are conscious of the effort required to learn, determined to adapt their knowledge through learning to add value to the mentee, and keenly investigate unfamiliar challenges to provide timely solutions. This type of learning does not include a formal educator but involves an individual with access to knowledge resources

(Schugurensky, 2000). It shows the mentor's resolve to close the contextual knowledge gap.

Accumulated knowledge, and know-how "amounts to intellectual property"; the core of what mentors have to offer and exchange (Clegg et al., 1999, p. 142). Self-directed learners want to understand the process and outcomes of their learning. In adult learning practices, as found in this study, "the learner exercises greater autonomy in matching his or her preferred modes of learning to specified learning objectives" (Sims and Sims, 1995, p. 3). When individuals identify with the "value and importance of their work", they demonstrate motivation (Deci, Olafsen and Ryan, 2017, p. 35). This study found the combination of determination and self-reflection necessary for a meaningful learning experience for mentors, as asserted by Kennett and Lomas, (2015). When the experience is meaningful for mentors, mentorship results in heightened self-worth and efficacy, both "indicative of competency" (p. 37).

Mentors begin to connect contextual suppositions as they make sense of the situation and sharpen their contextual understanding. They subsequently advise mentees based on newly acquired knowledge, existing skill, and experience. They continue by co-creating practical, and applicable solutions to mentee challenges or opportunities. Regardless of how mentees respond to advice, mentors reflect on the acceptance, implementation or non-response to advice given and co-created. These findings are congruent with Kram's (1983) beliefs that the focus of the cultivation stage is the testing of positive expectations that are developed in the initiation stage against reality. These similarities are attributed to similar mentor attitudes and eagerness to support the mentee.

8.4.1 Contextual supposition formulation (phase 3)

As mentors engage new context through supposition formulation, two overarching themes concerning the opportunity for them to demonstrate their proficiency emerged from this analysis. The first is their idea generation, connecting existing tacit knowledge with mentee challenges to generate possible solutions useful to the mentee's context. The second theme was rationalising their thought process. Mentors streamline and explain what they observe and try to connect solutions to mentee aspirations. Mentor proficiency is tested as they continue to close contextual

knowledge gaps and explore whether what they know is sufficient for the context presented.

Due to the uniqueness of entrepreneurial contexts, in a new mentorship relationship, the advisor's context knowledge is often different from that of their client (Han, Han and Brass, 2014). Therefore, adapting existing mentor knowledge through self-directed learning, also posited by Bouwmeester, Heusinkveld and Tjemkes, (2021) is vital to bridging knowledge gaps. Additionally, mentors find that "intellectual structures and cognitive processes that lead to useful insights and solutions, for example, divergent thinking, analogues, metacognition, lateral thinking, and associative thinking" all require some creativity and the ability to generate circumstantial possibilities (Whitaker *et al.,* 2020). Exploring what one can provide depends on an individual's assessment of problems and opportunities experienced, in this instance, by the mentee or their situation. The mentor also considers the mentee's proficiency, purpose, and receptivity to new experiences (Knox, 1980).

Knowledge of a specific skill does not imply that advisors are proficient in approaching every situation (Weinstein, 1993). This proposition is reinforced by mentors who focus on mentoring in specific industries. What is considered as subjective for industry-proficient mentors in this study is the size of the contextual knowledge gap. Knowledge disparity is not equal for all mentors because of their skill and experience. Adaptation of proficiency needs to match the disparity. Assimilation occurs through creativity in supposition formulation, being open to new perceptions and making connections with new information despite the weighting of the contextual knowledge gap. According to Bansal *et al.,* (2012), what is key at this stage is having adequate knowledge of the mentee's discipline and the ability to connect in a common language. By examining knowledge reserves, and recollection of similar tasks combined with past experiences, professional learners develop a solution that matches presented challenges (Ertmer and Newby, 1996).

Shadbolt *et al.,* (2015) state that mentors create new knowledge for themselves by eliciting information from the mentee. Professional practitioners become experts in knowledge elicitation as they are involved in daily problem-solving. These practitioners anticipate propositions that are applicable given the situational context (Shadbolt *et*

al., 2015). This statement aligns with supposition formulation and framing possible solutions found in the 3rd mentor practice phase of entrepreneurial mentorship. While knowledge elicitation is predominantly associated with formal techniques and interpretations, the effect is found to associate individual knowledge and the knowledge source (Cooke, 1994). Turner, (1982) on the other hand, refers to a similar stage, with a different approach to formulating suppositions experienced in management consulting. They suggest that consultants are diagnosticians. Like organisational mentors who diagnose the individual and organisational circumstances in the second mentor phase. Turner, (1982) asserts that the diagnosis process can sometimes strain the relationship between the client and consultant if they disagree. This could be assumed in mentorship relationships, depending on the approach and demeanour of the mentor and mentee.

Alternatively, advisors can become overconfident when they realise that the advice-seeker is examining their proficiency (Van Zant, 2022). For entrepreneurial mentors, formulating suppositions to adapt their proficiency can be complex; they are mindful not to be overconfident in their supposition formulation and focus on connecting their knowledge to the mentee's context without being overbearing. By carefully formulating suppositions and engaging with the mentee's context, mentors adjust existing knowledge and build confidence in their contextual understanding. Steady progression helps to build the advice-seeker's confidence in the mentor's capability, which is a critical step at this stage (Mole, 2021).

8.4.2 Advising and co-creating (phase 4)

Mentor commitment to supporting the mentee is at its height at this stage, as they actively advise and co-create solutions. They are determined to support the progress and success of their mentees, particularly when they (the mentors) find the challenges personally relevant and meaningful, coupled with self-directed knowledge. Mentors mention eagerness and selflessness when they offer their time and expertise, often at no cost. The benefit appears to outweigh the cost of time and energy particularly when the challenge aligns with their values, beliefs, and purpose. Sharing their knowledge and personal experiences, closes disparities, creates opportunities and breakthroughs (Han, Han and Brass, 2014).

Navigating the delivery of expertise through offering advice and collaborating with mentees on solutions is a typical task for organisational mentors during the cultivation stage of the relationship (Kram 1983; 1985). In entrepreneurial mentoring, it is represented by engaging with internal and external 1) relational challenges and/or opportunities, and 2) collaborating on executing operational effectiveness to deliver on objectives. Tonna, Bjerkholt and Holland (2017) state that educational mentors need to feel they have a certain level of 'professional agency', which gives them the authority to scrutinise and assess different solution strategies. Mole (2021) concurs and suggests a complex relationship between the advisor and their client and the significance of the advisor signalling their expertise. Entrepreneurial mentors mention not merely signalling their knowledge to the mentee but a continuation of adjusting assumptions and activity modifying contextual understanding during this phase of the relationship. "Expert knowledge and task-specific reactions" are acquired through experience" (Ericsson and Lehmann, 1996, p. 274).

In the field of medicine, practice-specific knowledge develops at a fast pace, requiring medical practitioners to continuously learn (Towle and Cottrell, 1996). The same is found to be the experience of entrepreneurial mentors; there's a continuous need to learn to offer effective and timely advice in diverse contexts. Due to complex socio-economic dynamics and the challenges faced by necessity-driven entrepreneurs in the South African context, mentees often abruptly change business models or their core business focus because of potential or secured new income sources. This volatility affects their context and creates new contextual knowledge gaps for their mentors. It requires mentors to be flexible, open-minded, and prepared for sudden change and re-calibration.

As a trusted advisor, a mentor moves into a consulting role, which involves giving advice and direction and leveraging what has previously been learnt. The role's foundation is shared client data, trust (Wasylyshyn, 2015) and a bond during this reciprocal engagement that enhances both participants' capabilities and decision-making skills (Hale and Phillips, 2019). Although the focus is usually on how the mentee benefits, including expanding their skills, gaining actionable knowledge, and becoming more resilient, this study expands our knowledge on the reciprocal nature

of the dyadic learning and a novel learning catalyst - bridging contextual knowledge gaps - found to be experienced by mentors.

Mentors in this study, were found to respect and appreciate the mentee's existing knowledge, hence the collaboration. Where this is the case, the expert-novice hierarchy between mentor and mentee is minimal and disproves the notion that mentors should be all-knowing as the experts in the relationship (Orland-Barak and Yinon 2005). Instead, in congruence with findings by Zhang et al. (2019), there is a synthesis of views between the mentor and the mentee. This view confirms the assertion that contextual knowledge is exchanged (Young and Perrewé, 2000), and knowledge is co-created by the mentor and mentee. Meyer's (2018) also found that role models work with the learner in co-creating meaning through practical learning. This is shown in this study as the mentor and mentee attempt to formulate suitable solutions to the specific mentee challenges. The dyad, mutually attempts applicable contextual solutions (Myers, 2018). Whereas in organisations enhanced performance is attributed to encoded and shared explicit knowledge for decision making (Nonaka *et al.*, 1994), in the entrepreneurial mentoring relationship, enhanced performance is attributed to shared implicit knowledge and solution co-creation.

8.4.3 Reflection on mentee advice internalisation (phase 5)

A key part of the entrepreneurial mentor's self-directed learning is drawn from evaluating and reflecting on the impact of the advice given to mentees. Knowledge gaps have been significantly reduced at this stage. Mentor reflection on the effort made in the mentorship relationship and its effect, can also be described as reflecting on the "intentional and conscious use of self" (Cook, 1999, p. 1293). Reflecting on the internalisation of mentor advice is found through two dimensions in this study, 1) interpersonal-awareness (how has the mentor's advice been effective to the mentee), 2) situational awareness (how has the mentor's advice been effective to the venture). These themes align with Allen, Poteet and Burroughs', (1997) view on the dynamics of mentoring as two-fold for mentors ''other-focused'' and ''self-focused.''(p.83). Mentors reflect on the mentee internalisation of advice on one hand (other) and their informal learning on the other hand (self).

Kullman (1998) posits the importance of the mentor grounding their reflection in the reality of the mentee's context, which could be varied. Reflecting on competence in leadership behaviour and skills is also a significant attribute that mentors intend to influence in the mentee (Harrison, Burnard and Paul, 2017). This competency is required for "exploiting opportunities in an entrepreneurial environment" (p. 544), not just identifying opportunities (Kuratko, 2007; Renko *et al.*, 2012). Contextual dynamics play a prominent role in determining how mentors define and demonstrate reflection. While mentors do reflect on the impact of their support on the mentee's enterprise, this thesis contends that it is often challenging for them to gauge the impact of the advice they have provided on their mentee's businesses when reflecting on how well their guidance has been internalised throughout the mentoring relationship.

P4: Entrepreneurial mentors often find it challenging to gauge the impact of the advice they have provided on their mentee's businesses when reflecting on how well their guidance has been internalised throughout the mentoring relationship.

On the other hand, mentee personal growth indicators are often more prominent and can be gratifying for mentors to observe. Kram, (1983, 1985); Noe, (1988) and St-Jean, (2011) state that mentorship enhances career-related and psychosocial support, these were found to be outcomes and benefits for mentees. This statement suggests a different perspective to organisational mentors and the observations of entrepreneurial mentees. Waters *et al.,'s* (2002, p. 108) investigation of nascent entrepreneurs and the relationship between "career-related mentoring, psychosocial mentoring, business success and self-esteem" found a higher level of psychosocial than career-related support. The assumption is that a higher level of psychosocial support is required for early-stage entrepreneurs.

Given the inconsistency of observed feedback on the internalisation of advice from mentees, mentors learnt by reflecting on their own perceptive of the impact of their advice. Jones', (2013) medical-related study had parallel findings, all the mentors learnt about their skills and practice from personal reflection. Reflective observation is a feature of learning by assimilation. Individuals with an assimilating learning style benefit from clear explanations rather than pragmatic learning opportunities as noted by Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, (2014).

8.4.4 Trust

Two broad trust-related themes emerged according to mentors involved in this study: 1) assurance of capability and 2) a demonstration of sincerity. Capability where trust is concerned implies skills, competencies and traits that foster influence in a particular domain (Mayer *et al.,* 1995). Sincerity is illustrated as a "consistency in virtue, or the absence of pretence" (Berger, 1973, p. 81). According to entrepreneurial mentors, mutual trust is the foundation of the relationship. Mole's (2021) findings concur that trust is paramount in advice-giving. In line with Hackmann and Malin's, (2020) findings, this study demonstrates that a long-term and trusting friendship can be formed between a mentor and mentee during this stage of the relationship. As trust and connection are important for the success of this dyadic relationship, unexpected bonds are often formed. A mentor participating in this study mentioned a gratifying reversal of roles with his mentee that involved both themes found in describing trust in a mentorship relationship. The mentee became the mentor, advising and guiding their mentor through an unfamiliar business model.

This is undoubtedly a relevant way for mentors to view their learning experience. By approaching mentorship with an attitude of appreciation, the mentor stands to gain several benefits, such as generating new ideas for other contexts. When trust is experienced, mentoring progresses from "routine and pragmatic concerns" to a more appreciative inquiry and evidence-based practice (Simmie and Moles 2011, p. 467). Trust improves strategic planning skills and renews entrepreneurial process design (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008). Working with others involves interdependence and the intent to minimise the risk integral to achieve personal or organisational goals (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

Trust bridges relational gaps between the mentor and their client. The mentorship cultivation stage allows mentors to make significant strides in bridging contextual knowledge gaps. For mentors, learning and development occur when trust is established between themselves and the mentee. Mentors appreciate and encourage their mentee's views by proactively building on their progress in a trustworthy environment (Memon *et al.,* 2015). Hardin (2002, p. 7) reinforces this in their assertion that trust motivates us to establish valuable exchanges. However, we may intentionally

choose to be trustworthy to encourage others to be cooperative (Hoogervorst *et al.,* 2015). In an experiment conducted by Sniezek and Van Swol (2001) and a study by Jungermann *et al.,* (2005, p. 158), trust was found to be associated with the knowledge of the advisor's experience and level of credible interaction. This view suggests that it originates from mentees.

Mentee transparency is equally important to mentors as some experienced the lack thereof, particularly concerning their financial situation. Trusting mentors with their financial status for example, is a central element of enterprise support, and an area often presented as needing mentor intervention. In their study of "economically significant start-ups", Bryan, Tilcsik and Zhu (2017) found that sometimes entrepreneurs (mentees), through stubbornness, may not disclose sufficient background information. Gaining precise information from the mentee is crucial for entrepreneurial mentors to create accurate suppositions concerning challenges faced by the mentee. Insufficient information affects the mentor's willingness to provide relevant and effective support to the mentee. Furthermore, appreciation and encouragement may be challenging to achieve without trust in a mentoring relationship.

Trust is a complex state and has been described by Rousseau *et al.,* (1998, p. 395) as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". When someone is trusted, it is assumed that they will be honest, and the reliance on that person is perceived in a specific way, there is anticipated betrayal if the person is disappointed in their trust, and gratitude if the trust is upheld (Holton, 1994). It motivates the "establishment of valuable exchanges" (Hardin 2002, p. 7). At this stage, according to mentee experience, the mentor provides support of various kinds - including career-related, psychosocial, cognitive development (Kram, 1983, 1985; Sullivan, 2000; Ragins, 2007; St-Jean, 2012; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021), and business continuity support (McKevitt and Marshall, 2015), to do so authentically, trust is essential. Once trust has been established, mentors are encouraged and recognised for creating value in solving presented dilemmas (Pascarelli, 1998).

8.4.5 New tacit knowledge creation

The creation of new tacit knowledge is an outcome of this entrepreneurial mentoring phase and self-directed learning. Nonaka, (1994) identified four new tacit knowledge creation dimensions namely: socialisation, externalisation, combination, and internalisation (Gourlay,*et al.*, 2006). The entrepreneurial mentorship relationship aligns with these dimensions. Mentors and mentees experience social interaction. Mentors externalise their existing tacit knowledge during the supposition formulation and advice giving and co-creation phases. Both members of the dyad combine knowledge to establish possible solutions to mentee objectives. Finally, mentors reflect on the internalisation of advice offered to mentees. Entrepreneurial advice-giving results in technical and cognitive new tacit knowledge creation. It is technical as it results in industry and context-specific solutions as the mentor adapts their perceptions to the mentee's context. Mentor cognitive new tacit knowledge creative is developed as they reflect on, internalise and synthesise their new learning. Technical tacit knowledge relates to know-how and skill, whereas cognitive tacit knowledge refers to mental models (Gourlay*, et al.*, 2006).

Kohlbacher, (2008) suggests that knowledge creation assumes a unilateral process of creativity. This study found that mentors were compelled to collaborate to create new knowledge. Mentors form new structures of interpreting entrepreneurial contexts and create new assumptions and principles while advising, being creative and learning. This view is similar to Peschl and Fundneider's, (2008) discussion of organisational change involving the amalgamation of "radical new knowledge and organic development from within organisations". They claim that openness, learning inspiration, readiness, and error contribute to knowledge creation and innovation. To provide the mentee with useful support, mentors reconsider their assumptions and initial way of thinking to gain new insights, which they offer to the mentee.

Tacit knowledge is mainly characterised by "insights, intuitions, hunches, inherent talents, skills, experience, know-how, know-why and working experience" (Mohammad and Al Saiyd, 2012, p. 116; Akhavan, Shahabipour and Hosnavi, 2018, p. 426). It has been described as "vectorial", meaning that the details are revealed based on our awareness of them when dealing with something else (Tsoukas, 2005,

p. 15) in a given situation (Koskinen, Pihlanto and Vanharanta, 2003). Mohammad and Al Saiyd, (2012, p. 116) argue that tacit knowledge is entrenched in experts' minds and is "difficult to articulate". Koskinen, Pihlanto and Vanharanta, (2003) and Mohammad and Al Saiyd, (2012) suggest that the difficulty in sharing tacit knowledge is partially in imparting competence.

Granted, their arguments were based on data in organisational settings. However, the nature of a dyadic relationship such as mentoring is founded on a different perspective, that is, sharing tacit knowledge. Mentors create new tacit knowledge from their interaction with mentees and are expected to share applicable insights without reservation. Mentors share tacit knowledge based on their know-how and skill (Akhavan, Shahabipour and Hosnavi, 2018). Kram (1983) confirms that knowledge creation occurs during the cultivation phase of mentoring, where individuals begin to unpack the value of their interactions. This finding aligns with those of Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, (2003); Hezlett, (2005); Jones, (2012), who argue that mentor and mentee cognitive and skill-based learning are heightened during mentoring.

In comparison, when an organisation lacks the knowledge required to achieve a desired goal and preserve its position in the market, it progresses into knowledge processing to bridge the gap (Zack, 1999). Organisations need to adapt to changing knowledge in their field to remain competitive. Mentors find themselves in a similar position, open to developing their knowledge although consistently benchmarking new knowledge against their capability and existing knowledge with the effect of creating new knowledge. Although Tow, Venable and Dell, (2015) argue that identifying where the knowledge is impactful becomes apparent when there is knowledge of the need to meet goals. Not so with mentors. They initially rely on existing knowledge and do not necessarily know its sufficiency to meet expectations or whether the required knowledge lies within the prospective new mentee's context.

In many instances, the techniques used for new knowledge creation and innovation include idea generation, selection, management and linking these ideas to objectives, brainstorming, research, and testing (Peschl and Fundneider's, 2008, p. 9). An organisational perspective involves acquiring, packaging, storing, transferring, reusing, or innovating knowledge (Despres and Chauvel, 1999). Mentors acquire and

clarify new contextual knowledge (mentee capability assessment), organise (proficiency self-assessment), engage with (formulate contextual suppositions, advise and co-create solutions), and reflect on (advice internalisation by the mentee) newly acquired tacit knowledge as a form of new tacit knowledge creation.

P5: During an entrepreneurial mentorship relationship, mentors acquire and clarify (mentee capability assessment), organise (proficiency self-assessment), engage with (formulate contextual suppositions, advise and co-create solutions), and reflect on (advice internalisation by the mentee) newly acquired contextual knowledge as a form of new tacit knowledge creation.

Any entity experiencing an active change in their environment should not merely process information competently but also create information and knowledge (Nonaka, 1994).

8.5   Integrative learning

When contextual knowledge gaps have been narrowed, with mentors having proceeded through situated, incidental, and self-directed learning, they integrate their advanced tacit knowledge *(phase 6)* and share it within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts when opportunities arise. This phase associates integrative learning with entrepreneurial mentoring. As noted by Bennett (2012, p. 28) and Newell's (1999), integrative learning "combines intentional non-consciousness of tacit knowledge with conscious access to learning products and mental modes". This form of learning "bridges learning across disciplines and time", associating knowledge with practice and encouraging insight into contextual issues (Mang, 2017, p. 450). If the new knowledge is not immediately relevant, it is said to be mentally stored. Relating to and drawing on the stored knowledge depends on exposure to relatable or interesting context. The examples provided by mentors on integrating knowledge while learning relate to some of the complex interdependencies of mentoring for mentors, mentioned by Huber *et al.*, (2007).

Bennett, (2012) states that individuals in decision-making roles with a deep reservoir of previous experiences, past accounts, and learning experiences cognitively match

patterns and processes and engage in transforming mental representatives of experiences to understand and integrate novel and existing tacit knowledge into unchartered situations. The three themes that emerged from mentors extend this view by specifying the impact of the newly created tacit knowledge, integration, and sharing of the knowledge into unchartered situations. First, learnt context contributes to the mentor's personal development, second, it improves their entrepreneurial acumen. Third, mentors integrate advanced tacit knowledge within their existing knowledge. Consequently, they share the knowledge when relevant in varied contexts, such as new mentorship relationships, and other contexts. Intentional learning, associated with integrative learning involves connecting "knowledge domains, contexts, and time" (Blackshields and Cronin, 2014). Thus knowledge is viewed as an asset and for knowledge to be accessed, investments in updating systems must be made (Rowley, 1999).

8.5.1 Personal development

Personal development is recognised by mentors after the self-directed learning phase and shapes their perspectives. This finding aligns with and contextually specifies Kennett and Lomas', (2015, p. 37) assertion that mentoring results in heightened self-worth and self-efficacy, both "indicative of competency" and features the meaningfulness of mentoring for mentors. Personal development entails becoming more perceptive of their abilities, improving their relevance (purpose) as role models, and increasing their empathy for the mentee's context. The connection between necessity-driven entrepreneurs and their mentors cannot be overlooked. Several mentors experienced a sense of social and historical empathy towards their mentees. Their volatile contexts provided robust learning and were an eye-opener as to how the "other side" lives. Bandura, (1997, p. 3) notes that individuals address a volatile environment by developing "cognitive, behavioural, and self-regulatory tools" for implementing suitable actions for ever-changing situations. Mentor commitment to necessity-driven owner-managers and their enterprises appears to cross over transactional boundaries, explaining their contextual empathy and personal development.

The sense of purpose observed positive change in self-perception and capability to achieve subsequent goals experienced by entrepreneurial mentors could be likened to an enrichment of their perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy, one's recognised ability to achieve desired outcomes should not be confused with optimism which explains when the future is seen as positive in any situation (Schwarzer and Warner, 2013). Hegel (1807) argued that people acquire self-knowledge through practical activity, where they are transformed. By so doing, individuals imprint themselves on their environment. The more they continue to shape things, the more they gain mastery of it (Yardley and Honess, 1987, p. 67). This type of experience is realised when steady achievements develop the skills, coping abilities and exposure required to perform tasks (Gist 1987).

8.5.2 Enhanced entrepreneurial acumen

This study recognises the importance of mentors enhancing their entrepreneurial acumen to respond to contexts in which mentorship practice occurs. The personal attributes that set people apart and are pertinent to accomplishing progression in the workplace are knowledge, traits and skill (Campbell *et al.*, 1993). Mentors enhance their entrepreneurial acumen - the ability to make efficient and precise entrepreneurial judgements and decisions - through learning. This view aligns with Drejer's, (2000) suggestion that there is an inherent need for individuals to understand the relationship between learning and its impact on acumen development. Klein and Bullock, (2006) questioned whether entrepreneurial acumen is taught and enhanced through education and training or if it is ingrained in specific individuals. They found that economists systematically teach individuals the entrepreneurial "way of thinking". Enterprises in fast-paced environments require enabling capabilities (Oliva and Kotabe, 2019) such as the entrepreneurial acumen found in mentors to achieve their goals.

Two indicators of entrepreneurial acumen are suggested by Ligthelm's, (2010) as insight into operational and innovative entrepreneurship. For entrepreneurial mentors, enhanced entrepreneurial acumen is a combination of 1) developed interpersonal and 2) communication skills, and 3) entrepreneurial competence. It required openness to new perspectives and acknowledging the dynamic nature of the relationship, which

may require a receptive outlook to competency development. It required acknowledging that existing knowledge is foundational and needs to be merged with new contextual knowledge to add value. Matching individuals in mentoring often results in diverse dyads; in other words, mentors and mentees are not always from the same entrepreneurial discipline; advancing entrepreneurial acumen supports their effectiveness in engaging with entrepreneurs.

From an interpersonal or relational perspective, mentors in this study observed their improved self-awareness, interaction, and acknowledged differing views with mentees as positive. Communication and interpersonal skills identified as advanced by mentors are interlinked and support effective engagement and their advisory role. Mumford, Campion and Morgeson, (2007, p. 160) state that interpersonal skills are increasingly required above business and strategic skills. "Social perceptiveness (being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do), coordination (adjusting actions in relation to others' actions), negotiation (bringing others together to reconcile differences), and persuasion (persuading others to change their minds or behaviour)" are key dimensions of interpersonal skills.

Mentors also noted that their communication skills developed through recognising the value of asking relevant questions and actively listening to mentees who require them to be a sounding board, and through open-mindedness to mentee context. Behaviour that shows a sense of community and camaraderie is found in individuals who are more capable in their communication skills; they are likely to perceive and integrate their skills (Dierdorff, Rubin and Ellington, 2021). Duffy *et al's.*, (2004, p. 497) view of the link between interpersonal and communication skills states that communication skills are a form of "performance of tasks and behaviours by an individual", whereas interpersonal skills are "inherently relational and process orientated, they focus on the effect of communication on another person".

Competence can be perceived in multiple ways: as a "human capital or resource; the requirements of a task for a certain job; and the capability of an individual to successfully handle certain situations or complete a certain task" (Eilström and Kock, 2008, p. 6). All three of these dimensions apply to mentors and the entrepreneurial competencies they develop, as outlined in this study's findings. Mentors can be likened

to human capital or a resource for enterprises with minimal capabilities; they possess knowledge required for the task and have the ability to recognise and support mentees to complete enterprise-related tasks.

For mentors, well-thought-out competencies develop skill which requires considerable practice, the more familiar the mentor is with the competence, the more of an understanding they have of their practice (Cornford and Athanasou, 1995). Advancing their competencies means that they gain an increased sense of know-how. Besides concurring with the above mentioned assertion, the findings in this study also have similarities to Langdon's, (2017) conclusions on the development of competencies for teaching mentors. Through an examination of "how mentors accommodate their learning in practice", Langdon found that for mentors to develop their expertise, they need, 1) not only a commitment to learning but a willingness to unravel treasured beliefs and practices; 2) time to build knowledge and to inquire, assess and enact new knowledge and learning (Langdon 2017).

8.5.3 Integrate advanced tacit knowledge (phase 6)

Mentors were found to integrate advanced tacit knowledge within their existing knowledge through 1) consolidating their new learning and 2) incorporate new signalling capabilities. Mentorship becomes a win-win experience for mentors. Explanations of learning affirm that context strongly influences recollection of previous learning and depends on whether the contextual structure is meaningful (Tessmer and Richey, 1997). Integrative learning is intentional and is demonstrated by mentors in this study. It is the ability to "connect skills and knowledge from one course to solve and explore issues in another, and the capacity to reflect and identify connections made over time" (Miller, 2005, p. 11).

8.5.3.1 Consolidate new learning

Mentors consider the consolidation of new learning as a natural progression at this stage, and a necessity as their skillset is complemented. The value proposition for mentors is the reduction of contextual knowledge gaps. Entrepreneurs typically engage mentors as a strategic resource for their knowledge and skill, to enhance

competencies needed and to support the firm's sustainability, survival and/or competitive advantage (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Consolidating new knowledge for entrepreneurial mentors equips them as strategic resources. Mentors effectively "acquire, synthesise and generate new knowledge applications" from their mentorship experiences (Kogut and Zander, 1992, p. 384; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Gebauer, Worch and Truffer, 2012; Sheng, 2017). Context-specific and tacit knowledge which is developed by mentors is rooted in their commitment to the relationship, their mentorship experience and as stated by Zack, (1999), this type of knowledge is "unique and difficult to imitate" (p. 128). Practically speaking, the formal and informal advisory tools used to support mentee capability assessments are contextually updated as part consolidating new learning.

Mentors mentioned how consolidating their new learning has developed new insights and improves their ability to undertake goal-focused actions effectively. They described how they had acted on the confidence created by mentoring and adjusted their thinking and actions. A mentor gave an example of a change in their attitude and taking action in an area they otherwise would not have approached, giving credit to assimilating and merging existing with new learning. He described it as a "leap of faith" that he took in this area that he had previously avoided. Additionally, an alternate example was offered, where financially related mentee challenges were previously approached with caution by a mentor, however consolidating new learning gave them confidence in their approach to finance-related issues. This integrative concept of learning that consolidates an individual's knowledge is typically linked with success (Matlay, 2000).

Zack (1999) considers that to make knowledge more accessible, consolidating new learning through systematic categorising for future access is helpful for imminent experiences and fosters greater leverage from the learning experiences. The more mentors learn and combine their learning with existing knowledge, the more value they can offer during mentorship, "overcome entrepreneurial challenges, contribute to decision making, and guide mentee capability" as they strive to reach objectives effectively and efficiently. Their knowledge is suitably dynamic as it is constantly merged through experience and learning. The tacit knowledge consolidated by

mentors is contextual and personal. When individuals consolidate the knowledge into their structured assessment tools, artifacts are created (McInerney, 2002, p. 1010).

8.5.3.2 Incorporate signalling capabilities

Incorporating signally capabilities as a theme that emerged in the findings responds to the assertion that more attention needs to be directed towards research on signalling interpretation. Honest signalling is vital, particularly for prospective entrepreneurial investors in the context of new venture financing (Colombo, 2021). For mentors and their perspective of mentees, signalling facilitates the direction of the relationship. Failure in accomplishing certain entrepreneurial activities helps to portray a more realistic picture for mentors, signalling mentee credibility and thinking. Signals for mentors, pertaining to specific mentee attributes are required for success in their role. The recognition of mentee self-belief, and possible risk aversion signals for example, are developed by mentors over time and integrated into their mentorship practice in subsequent mentorship relationships. When there is a decrease in information asymmetry between both parties affecting decision-making for the dyad, this is a significant signal and could influence a shift in the mentorship relationship. Signalling is particularly "useful for describing behaviour when two parties (individuals or organisations) have access to different information" (Connelly *et al.,* 2011, p. 39).

Successful entrepreneurs are passionate about entrepreneurship. Passion is significant to the self-identity of entrepreneurs and is associated with intense self-belief that translates into positive entrepreneurial activities (Cardon *et al.,* 2009). Identifying this passion signal prior to and during mentorship is essential for entrepreneurial mentors and is a skill developed through experience and signal interpretation. According to Herbig and Milewicz (1994, p. 27), in market signalling within business-to-business communications, signalling is "an easy-to-acquire, extrinsic informational cue" (p. 31). Signalling skills are advantageous and occur when a "sender can selectively leak information to its competitors through indicators. The competitor can then improve its reaction by better understanding the sender's intentions and the reasoning behind its marketing action. Each firm in an industry can interpret the other's actions, motives, or commitments, and by that improve its own choice of actions". Signs of desire to succeed displayed by mentees and identified throughout mentoring

by mentors also consisted of specific attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, the quicker mentors realise these signals, the more efficiently they can respond.

The signal to terminate the mentorship relationship is another indication developed by mentors through experience and incorporated for future use. Mentors cite themselves, the situation, and mentee behaviour as initiators of the termination of the mentoring relationship. The venture might organically grow, the mentee's attitude might alter, or the mentors sometimes recognises that they may not be able to add further value. Relationships could be viewed as concluded "when no activity links or resource ties exist between the parties involved in the relationship" (Giller and Matear, 2001, p. 94). Baxter and Philpott, (1982) assert that relationships can be terminated by direct or indirect strategies. In direct strategies, termination is transparent and clearly communicated, while in indirect strategies, the individual initiating the disengagement avoids hurting the other party. This aligns with mentor experience, direct and indirect termination strategies from both parties. Mentors note that being able to develop and notice such signals is a useful skill for anticipating change, decision-making and initiating subsequent mentoring relationships.

8.5.4 Knowledge sharing

At the beginning of a new entrepreneurial mentorship relationship, new contextual knowledge is shared between mentors and mentee through dialogue. At the other end of the continuum, newly developed tacit knowledge is shared in new mentorship relationships and various contexts. Mentors state how integrating advanced knowledge contributes to making informed subsequent decisions. Zhang *et al.*, (2019) note that there are limited studies on the drivers of high-quality knowledge transfer, particularly concerning entrepreneurship. These newly learnt insights enrich future mentoring relationships, accelerating the mentor's ability to positively adapt their response to mentee problems. Mentors share knowledge of best practice, competency embedded insight, operating processes, and enterprise internal structures to enhance mentee entrepreneurial practices. They make use of this knowledge when it is contextually relevant. Mentor experience is in contrast with Zack's, (1999) suggestion that a typical characteristic of tacit knowledge is that it is not readily available for others. Holste and Fields' (2009) study on affect-and-cognitive-based trust on

knowledge sharing conclude that affect-based trust has greater influence on the willingness to share knowledge. Affect and trust are attributes found in this study of mentoring relationships and illustrate the foundation of knowledge sharing in mentorship relationships.

Parallel to findings by Argote *et al.*, (2000), this study found that if the knowledge gained by a mentor cannot be adapted to a new context, it may limit their commitment to new mentees. Therefore, the affect-based proficiency self-assessment undertaken in the initial stages of the prospective relationship is fundamental, it adds meaning to the mentor's commitment, experience and willingness to share previously acquired tacit knowledge. In organisations, knowledge sharing, typically referred to as knowledge transfer is used to enhance the firm's competitive advantage in line with its strategy, and its success can be measured by shifts in knowledge and the firm's performance (Argote and Ingram, 2000).

Entrepreneurial mentors gain and retain new contextual knowledge with the intention to share it. Knowledge sharing is a critical success factor in managing their knowledge. In contrast to the barriers to sharing knowledge that sometimes exists in organisations, existing systems and procedures, and intellectual property concerns often hinder knowledge sharing. In essence, the barriers experienced by organisations lie in individuals and social organisational systems (Hong, Suh and Koo, 2011, p. 14417). Culture has also been identified as a potential barrier to knowledge sharing, as knowledge is valued differently in different cultural contexts (De Long and Fahey, 2000). This is an dynamic highlighted by Geber and Keane, (2017) as they outline the principles that apply to a mentorship relationship in African practice. They suggest the mindfulness of different cultural views and references as a key principle. Rowley (1999) suggests that norms, values and actions are developed from managing knowledge, encouraging creativity and its onward sharing. For entrepreneurial mentors, knowledge sharing is a significant outcome of the mentorship relationship.

8.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal entrepreneurial mentor learning in a new mentorship relationship. This

chapter has discussed the findings presented in Chapters 5,6, and 7. It shows new insights and expanded on the meaning of the findings. It integrated the findings with existing literature, reflected how current knowledge is extended and the differences and similarities with existing literature. As an outcome of the integration of the findings and existing literature, a conceptual framework (see figure 29, page 231) demonstrates a taxonomy of mentor informal learning, driven by bridging contextual knowledge gaps. The taxonomy is underpinned by six entrepreneurial mentor phases. The framework emerged inductively as the findings (see figure 28, page 225) were interpreted and integrated with existing literature to create insight into the entrepreneurial mentor's experience.

The six entrepreneurial mentor phases show that to gain insight, clarity and understanding of new mentee context, mentors conduct a mentee capability assessment (phase 1). They use familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experiences. Influenced by perceived knowledge dissonance, mentors are found to introspect and complete a proficiency self-assessment (phase 2) reinforced by an affective response. They evaluate their competencies, that is, their existing professional expertise (what they know), skill (what they must do), and capabilities and constraints (what they can do) in relation to the perceived required knowledge. It is at this stage where mentors formulate contextual suppositions (phase 3) based on new contextual knowledge, advice is offered, and solutions are co-created with the mentee (phase 4). Mentors reflect on how mentees internalise advice (phase 5) given, which they learn from as it resets their existing knowledge. Mentors integrate their advanced tacit knowledge (phase 6). They share the new tacit knowledge within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts when opportunities arise.

The findings offer insight of developmental informal learning experienced by entrepreneurial mentors. The four forms of informal learning: situated, incidental, self-directed and integrative learning extend various typologies of informal learning identified in several contexts including education, organisations and angel investor experience with entrepreneurs. The recursive assessments completed by mentors of the mentee and themselves, including and the association between affect and the proficiency self-assessment, contribute to novel insight on the entrepreneurial

mentor's experience with new context. Several areas of further inquiry were suggested through additional propositions which suggest associations between identified concepts.

The implications of the findings in this study are significant for mentorship theory and practice. They offer mentors practice structure and guidance. Insight into mentor informal learning extends informal learning literature in the context of entrepreneurial mentoring (see conceptual framework, figure 29, page 231). The findings inform the frequent assumption made in literature about the role of context in an entrepreneurial mentor-mentee relationship, previously in favour of contextual factors affecting the mentee. They reinforce that entrepreneurial mentoring involves a significant form of support and reciprocal exchange of ideas and joint construction of knowledge with mentees. The next chapter concludes this thesis, it illustrates theoretical contributions and discusses research implications. Included are suggestions on future research, practical and policy implications. The limitations of this research are noted, and a conclusion completes the chapter.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has shown how bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal entrepreneurial mentor learning in a new mentorship relationship. Six mentor phases are this study's key contribution to knowledge. The phases advance mentor practice theory in a dyadic relationship. Existing literature is elaborated by the taxonomy of mentor informal learning. Furthermore, the relation between affect and a proficiency self-assessment completed by mentors; and the two recursive assessments identified in the six phases, linked by perceived dissonance extend insight on the influence of new contextual knowledge on mentors in a new mentorship relationship. The conceptual framework see, Figure 29, Chapter 8 demonstrates novel procedural knowledge. It represents the relationships and interdependencies of the key findings. This chapter elaborates on the study's theoretical advancements, outlines the implications of the findings for future research, practice and policy, and notes some limitations to the study.

Interpretive scholars have made significant contributions in the past by capturing the significance of what could be perceived as ordinary activities, expanding insights about "norms and practices, and accounting for affective features, including deciphering actions and interdependencies experienced by individuals", (see Putnam and Banghart, 2017, p. 17). Theory elaboration is the approach adopted to illustrate theoretical advancement in this study. New theoretical insights developed by "structuring constructs and relations will account for and explain empirical observations. Complex relations that have not been previously associated are identified and sequential relations not considered in prior theory" (see Fisher and Aguinis, 2017, p 448) explain the contributions to knowledge.

This study elaborations on the following relationships:
1. Sequence relation - six entrepreneurial mentor phases reflect the relations between constructs experienced by mentors.
2. Sequence relation - the taxonomy of entrepreneurial mentor informal learning is an ordering of their learning during mentorship.

3. Specific relation – demonstrates the relation between mentor affect and a proficiency self-assessment.

4. Recursive relations - demonstrates two mentor assessments linked by perceived dissonance.

9.2 Theoretical contribution

9.2.1 Key contribution – six entrepreneurial mentor phases

The contribution to knowledge of this thesis is the six entrepreneurial mentor phases demonstrated through sequence relation. Although this study did not aim to identify the developmental mentor phases, it offers a key insight into six distinguishable phases experienced by entrepreneurial mentors parallel to their informal learning process. To gain insight, clarity and understanding of the new context, mentors conduct a mentee capability assessment (phase 1). They use familiar appraisals like existing structured or unstructured tools, and knowledge accumulated from previous experiences. Influenced by perceived knowledge dissonance, mentors are found to introspect and complete a proficiency self-assessment (phase 2) reinforced by an affective response.

Mentors evaluate their competencies, that is, their existing professional expertise (what they know), skill (what they must do), and capabilities and constraints (what they can do) in relation to the perceived required knowledge. It is at this stage where mentors formulate contextual suppositions (phase 3) based on new contextual knowledge, advice is offered, and solutions are co-created with the mentee (phase 4). Mentors reflect on how mentees internalise advice (phase 5) given, which they learn from as it resets their existing knowledge. Mentors integrate their advanced tacit knowledge (phase 6). They share the new tacit knowledge within subsequent mentorship relationships and varied professional contexts when opportunities arise.

The six entrepreneurial mentor phases extend mentorship theory. Four phases specific to organisational mentors are: 1) "define the objectives and scope of the project, 2) diagnose the individual and organisational circumstances, 3) implement educational programmes, 4) evaluate the intervention", (see Kram, 1985, p. 40). The most prominent differences lie in phases 3, 4 and 6 for entrepreneurial mentors.

The six phases show entrepreneurial mentor experience as professional, relational and developmental with personal dimensions. Consistent changes in the mentorship sequence for mentors, demonstrates the complexity of the relationship, and the unique interaction with contextual knowledge gaps at different phases. They show variance theory building, (see Cloutier and Langley, 2020). They link conceptual constructs, and show the "temporal ordering and probabilistic interaction" (Fisher and Aguinis, 2017, p. 448) situational to entrepreneurial mentor experience in a new mentorship relationship.

9.2.2 A taxonomy of entrepreneurial mentor informal learning

The taxonomy provides novel insight into an interdependent, outcomes-based classification: situated, incidental, self-directed, and integrative learning experienced by mentors at specific phases of mentorship. The informal learning dimensions outline mentor experience, driven by bridging conceptual knowledge gaps and demonstrate sequence relation. The gradual reduction of the contextual knowledge gap shifts the dynamics of mentor informal learning. Mentor learning changes from extrinsic (situated) to intrinsic (incidental and self-directed) and back to extrinsic (integrative) driven by bridging contextual knowledge gaps. This unique opportunity to integrate process and variance dimensions (Fisher and Aguinis, 2017) is relevant to the informal learning body of knowledge. It elaborates on informal learning literature by classifying how entrepreneurial mentors develop their knowledge during mentorship (see Rekha and Ganesh, 2012; Gandhi and Johnson, 2016) and highlights the complexity of learning, behaviour and communication, critical to mentor experience.

A taxonomy of informal learning using intentionality and awareness as distinguishing factors was mapped by Schugurensky, (2000) as self-directed, incidental, and socialisation, referring to varied situations, that is, a child, the formal school environment, and social issues, respectively. Bennett, (2012) then reconceptualised Schugurensky's (2000) typology by illustrating a four-part model. Socialisation was renamed 'tacit' due to its association with adapting to an often-hidden organisational culture. The inclusion of integrative learning explained the context to depict the impact of tacit learning on adult learning. Peeters *et al.,* (2014) partially concurred with both Schugurensky (2000) and Bennett's (2021) conceptualisation of informal learning in

education as self-directed, incidental, and tacit learning. Botelho *et al.,* (2021) broadened Bennett's (2012) model of informal learning for angel investors in their support of small businesses, allowing for the adjustable nature across the modalities of tacit learning mentioned by Bennett (2000). The learning opportunities experienced by angel investors were unique due to the complexity of their careers and individual learning styles.

The six entrepreneurial mentor phases and taxonomy of informal learning as sequence relation elaborations, both involve change over time, the essence of process data, mainly comprising of the prolonged recollection of occurrences. The chronological order of a situation and likely interdependence between the variables offer a sequence that results in an outcome. The "sequence of events that lead to an outcome (e.g., do A and then B get to C?)" and provide an enriched and more valid perspective of reality relate to process theory building (see Langley, 1999, p. 692).

9.2.3 An affect-based proficiency self-assessment

This thesis provides novel understanding into specific relations between two constructs. The relationship between affect and the proficiency self-assessment completed by mentors in phase 2 of the six entrepreneurial mentor phases. While one would suppose affect to be present in informal mentorship relationships, it is unexpectedly identified in entrepreneurial mentor experience within a formal mentorship relationship. The significance of both concepts is clarified in the context of entrepreneurial mentor experience. Affect in entrepreneurial mentorship influences mentor choices and attitude. Like chemistry, connection, or liking, affect becomes an emotional knowledge gathering and decision-making influence, comparatively found in a romantic relationship (see, Hill, 2009). Identifying the association of affect and the mentor proficiency self-assessment expands our understanding of its influence on mentor commitment to a relationship and to bridging contextual knowledge gaps.

The entrepreneurial mentor affect-based experience is driven by bridging contextual knowledge gaps, this experience differs from organisations. Organisational drivers of closing knowledge gaps are predominantly cognitive based. Literature informs us that organisations undergo a proficiency assessment process driven by knowledge

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disparity, strategic competition, and performance (see Zack, 1999 and Qi *et al.*, 2020). The personal and episodic nature of mentoring differs from organisations with a similar experience, it highlights the emotional element of mentoring for entrepreneurial mentors.

9.2.4 Recursive mentor assessments linked by perceived knowledge dissonance

This contribution to knowledge involves a recursive assessment process linked by knowledge dissonance. Mentors initially assess mentees (mentee capability assessments), influenced by perceived dissonance, they shift the focus to assessing themselves (mentor proficiency self-assessments). The process of identifying client capability gaps at the commencement of a small business advice relationship is not uncommon, (see Mole, 2021). However, the recursive nature of a mentor proficiency self-assessment found in this study offers new insight into how this relationship develops and "evolves as two constructs where dyadic interactions between actors operate at different levels of analysis" (Fisher and Aguinis, 2017, p. 449). A similar recursive relation elaboration is found by Tripsas and Gavetti, (2000) in the relationships found between managerial cognitions, organisational capabilities, and firm inertia.

This insight expands our understanding of the influence of perceived dissonance on mentor responses in a mentorship relationship and the influence of new context on mentors mentioned in Allen, (2007). Mentor response leads to the significant commitment to or rejection of the mentoring relationship. The relationship between these constructs (mentee and mentor assessments, linked by perceived dissonance) highlight the strategic change found in a process model, which involves "events, activities, and choices" (Langley, 1999, p. 693). Contrary to entrepreneurial mentors, educational mentors find it difficult to introspect during the mentorship relationship, (see Langdon 2017, p.541). This recursive relation brings insight into the entrepreneurial mentor's response to new context. The next section outlines the implications of the findings for future research, practice and policy, and notes some limitations to the study.

9.3 Implications

9.3.1 Future research

This study outlines the dynamic composition of six entrepreneurial mentor phases and a taxonomy of mentor informal learning that support mentors during mentoring. Future research must consider how practitioners: 1) experience the six phases, and 2) subsequently engage with the six phases once contextual knowledge gaps are reduced. Furthermore, the transferability of the six phases found in this study to other disciplines, for example, different SME advice-giving forms pose an opportunity for future studies. The outcomes of this study also indicate the scope to further explore the extent of mentor awareness of the taxonomy of mentor informal learning and how that could motivate mentors to engage in mentorship. Other contextual complexities of the entrepreneurial mentor's experience outside of the boundaries of this study could be studied further.

The interpretivist approach remains the most appropriate for this exploratory study. However, various other philosophical approaches could also be subsequently applied to gain further understanding of entrepreneurial mentor experiences. There are opportunities to collect and analyse numerical data to "establish patterns, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalise results to wider populations" (see Bhandari, 2023, p. 1). The propositions offered in the discussion in chapter 8 are a starting point for explaining the suggested relationships between concepts to further this discussion. Much scope presents itself for future research to establish the effects of other demographic related experiences. Focus on other mentor demographic elements like ethnicity, gender, experience and age using different philosophical approaches will offer further insight into mentor experience.

The cross-sectional approach established insights and discovered meanings of mentor experience where data was collected at a point in time. A longitudinal approach would provide further insight over an extended period of data collection. This research area could be further studied by using other methods like a descriptive approach which is inclined to be observational when qualitative, and establishes a real-time profile of

events, individuals and contexts. A descriptive study is typically an extension of exploratory research, (see Saunders *et al.,* 2019).

The history of South Africa's interconnectedness with socio-cultural aspects is intriguing, particularly when they influence the demeanour of mentors. Ubuntu, like mentoring is a "relationship-centred paradigm" (p.10). Future studies will be an opportunity for mentors to honour both "their worldview and values and still benefit from the experience," and knowledge of mentoring. It is worth exploring whether there lies a greater sensitivity to the embedded mentor approach to mentorship that draws a uniquely South African perspective to mentorship because of Ubuntu values (see Gerber and Keane 2017, p.8).

Lastly, research through collaboration, working with other like-minded peers, would generate new insights. Several mentors who participated in this study were trained coaches and indicated the importance of understanding the difference between the two practices for the benefit of entrepreneurs during their mentorship support. Mentoring and coaching are concepts that are often confused or used interchangeably, when in fact they are two different disciplines with similarities. Whether mentors who are trained coaches could benefit from applying both disciplines could be studied further. Mentors who are coaches may benefit from alternating between a coaching and mentoring approach when they provide entrepreneurial support. Further research in this context could contribute to valuable ideas and techniques for providing holistic entrepreneurial support.

9.3.2 Practical implications

This study has contributed to the understanding of mentor experience, the value of mentorship and its impact on entrepreneurship. Its insights could shift the dialogue, perceptions, and engagement of stakeholders on mentorship and contribute notably to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Examining this study's practical implications requires a nuanced analysis of the key stakeholders in South Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem and how they will benefit from the findings. Ecosystems have gained prominence in entrepreneurship policy, underscoring the need to explore their relevance in South Africa (see Bowmaker-Falcomer & Meyer, 2022 and Spigel and

Harrison, 2018). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are complex, they play a critical role in supporting the development and growth of innovative startups. They are shaped by a combination of social elements. A thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem requires solidarity and a sense of community that adapts to internal and external environmental changes (see Spigel, 2017, p. 47). When an entrepreneurial ecosystem is well-structured-and-organised, the sense of community impacts entrepreneurial activity and culture.

Education and training are identified as one of the key elements of the South African entrepreneurial ecosystem (Bowmaker-Falcomer and Meyer 2022). Within the elements, are sub-indices known as the 3As, entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities, and aspirations. The 3As represent the population's feelings about entrepreneurship (attitudes), the capabilities and skills required to start up and successfully operate a venture (abilities), and the different types of business ventures started which should positively impact society and change the status quo (aspirations) (see The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem of South Africa Report, 2017).

The interplay between individuals and institutions shapes the character of entrepreneurial ecosystems, as individuals or groups may have a vested interest in a venture's future and success. Relationships between ecosystem elements are interconnected but not always straight-forward (Spigel, 2017, p. 56). The significance of the relationships in ecosystems is determined by stakeholder power to influence, the legitimacy of their relationship with the firm, and the urgency of their claim on the firm (see Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). Therefore, stakeholder involvement is key for strengthening links between the elements and building relationships.

The fundamental insights from this study are noteworthy, key stakeholders in the South African entrepreneurial ecosystem could recalibrate their approach to entrepreneurial mentorship. The insights offer guidance, structure, points of vital discussion and actionable suggestions to objectives to be discussed in planning, training and development plenaries. The key stakeholders (mentors, mentees, institutions – small business academies within universities, private and public incubators and accelerator programmes - and policy makers) were selected based on the findings and boundaries of this research.

The next section will focus on education and training, a South African entrepreneurship ecosystem element aligned to this study. The approach taken is championed by Ulrich (1983) who emphasises the importance of considering stakeholders who are directly or indirectly affected by consequences of a firm's development, and who are involved in administration or resource provision. The discussion will be guided by the 3As and relevant reports like the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, South Africa (2022) and the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem of South Africa report (2017). Insights on practical implications will refer to the taxonomy of mentor informal learning (situated, incidental, self-directed and integrative learning), driven by bridging contextual knowledge gaps and underpinned by the six entrepreneurial mentor phases found in this study: 1) conduct a mentee capability assessment, 2) complete a proficiency self-assessment, 3) formulate contextual suppositions, 4) advise and co-create solutions with the mentee, 5) reflect on mentee advice internalisation and 6) integrate advanced tacit knowledge.

9.3.2.1   Education and Training – Mentors, mentees, institutions, and policy makers

a) Mentors

Entrepreneurial mentors are the unit of analysis in this study and key stakeholders in the entrepreneurial mentorship dyad and ecosystem. They provide unequivocal support to enterprises during a mentorship relationship. Mentor ability to adapt to different approaches, structure and more interactive forms of training and development will benefit mentees and provide and/or improve identifiable mentor capability. Their attitudes, abilities and aspirations are valuable indicators that influence the quality of support provided to entrepreneurs as they develop their enterprises for success. This section is the basis of practical support beneficial to both experienced and inexperienced mentors in varying degrees based on their mentorship proficiency.

Attitudes
The findings in this study suggest that a mindset that is receptive to learning at every stage will improve the entrepreneurial mentor's overall mentorship experience. This involves acknowledging practical guidelines such as the six phases and informal learning taxonomy identified as insight into mentorship practice. Such an approach to

learning fosters mentor adaptability to industry trends and contexts, crucial in providing effective advice. It encourages contextual empathy identified in this study, which facilitates compassionate responses to challenging situations and cultivates a curious attitude of discovery grounded in entrepreneurial best practice. Innovation and creativity particularly when co-creating solutions (phase 4) are also stimulated by openness to learning, allowing mentors to offer fresh perspectives to addressing challenges. Diverse leaning experiences encountered during mentorship contribute to the creation and integration of new tacit knowledge (phase 6).

Abilities

This study found that mentors tend to adopt a flexible structure that suits the context and the individual they are mentoring. Mentors generally do not follow a formal phased approach due to the lack of practical guidelines (see Kram, 1985). The six mentoring phases identified in this study serve as a procedural guide, offering intrinsic benefits for both new and experienced mentors. To fully apply the phases will require training and discussion on the meaning, understanding and influence of the phases as a mentoring structure. A fundamental aspect of mentoring is developing mentor skill and confidence in their capacity. Novice and advanced mentors will find the six phases valuable as guidance and an invitation of awareness of introspection and its influence on their decision making. Their application will depend on individual openness to learning and acceptance of the application of the phases throughout the mentorship relationship.

After implementing the six phases found in this study, mentors who would have been familiarised with the phases and/or those who are experienced mentors with existing mentoring frameworks are inclined to leverage the phases as a frame of reference. In so doing, they are encouraged to incorporate the phases where applicable. Alongside observing and incorporating pertinent strategies, behaviour, and processes into their approach towards new mentorship relationships or new objectives within existing relationships; mentors are also urged to discern and acknowledge recurrent mentee contextual situations. Such adaptation is key, considering the ever-changing resources and limitations inherent in mentee contextual situations. An understanding of the nuances of mentorship relationships highlights the need for continued acumen that influences mentor practice. It also offers more insight into the transformative process

and professional development that occurs for mentors in this dyadic relationship as noted by Langdon's (2017).

Guidance on the influence of the entrepreneurial mentor taxonomy of informal learning identified in this study provides insight into different forms of knowledge acquisition during mentorship. This insight contributes to mentor personal and professional development, it is empowering and would influence an informed decision to become a mentor. Situated learning, experienced during the mentee capability assessment (phase 1), when developed and well-executed provides a thorough understanding of mentee context. It is an invitation from mentees for mentors (as a learner) to become more fully involved in their context (see Lave and Wenger, 1991). A thorough understanding of mentee context is a key element to the continuation of the relationship. Incidental learning experienced during the completion of the proficiency self-assessment (phase 2) is mentor-centred, it highlights their abilities and gaps in knowledge. This study identified that when mentors understand their abilities, it leads to informed choices about relevant actions. Self-directed learning (phases 3-5) assists mentors in effectively bridging knowledge gaps, they create new tacit knowledge through supposition formulation, co-creating solutions and reflection on mentee advice internalisation. Integrative learning (phase 6) indicates growth, and sharing new tacit knowledge in new mentorship relationships and other contexts benefits both the mentor and subsequent clients.

Aspirations

Every proficient and aspiring entrepreneurial mentor should be encouraged to participate in mentorship and recognise the value they offer entrepreneurs as role models. Whilst gender influences are prevalent in mentorship, and female mentors may not have the same confidence to compete with male mentors in providing career development in a corporate environment (see Allen and Eby, 2003), there was no indication in this study's analysis and findings that demographic attributes influenced the mentor's experience in a meaningful way. Despite the different demographic dimensions of the participants in this study, for example gender, race, education, and experience, all mentors felt confident to participate in their role, to fully engage in mentorship interactions and in the data collection process. Instead, the analysis highlighted that mentors understand the benefits of mentoring as influenced by the

extent to which the mentee is prepared to be receptive to interventions, see phase 5 (reflect on advice internalisation by the mentee). The analysis identified that mentees, with no discriminatory intentions, tend to seek out particular functions from specific mentors as role models despite their demographic profile. Therefore, all mentorship training programmes are encouraged to discuss these details, particularly those that train and develop prospective women mentors. Training programme managers should continue to encourage new and more experienced mentors and emphasise that when women do not recognise other women in positions of influence, they may perceive a lack of role models to emulate (see Torres-Ramos *et al.,* 2021).

b) Mentees

Mentees are central and key beneficiaries of entrepreneurship mentorship and the ecosystem. Seemingly small shifts in their mindset could result in enhanced perceptions of support and development and contribute to improved interactions with mentors. Approaching the support offered in a way that encourages collaboration will increase mentor commitment to their sustenance. Their training and development, particularly in formal mentorship programmes could facilitate optimistic attitudes and more robust capabilities.

Attitudes

Mentors in this study demonstrated a detailed, mentee-focused approach to understanding their context during the mentee capability assessment (phase 1). The finding is contrary to the notion held by some mentees that mentors "leap in with statements about their own experience to offer solutions" rather than systematically reviewing the mentee's experience and what it means (see Mumford, 1995, p. 4). Mentees are encouraged to have patience and a more open-minded attitude towards entrepreneurial mentors during mentorship. An explanation of the structure of engagement such as the six entrepreneurial mentor phases identified in this study will also assist mentees in their assurance of an organised approach to mentoring.

Abilities

Mentor knowledge gaps are bound to exist at the commencement of a new entrepreneurial mentorship relationship due to the uniqueness of a mentee's context.

Assurance to the mentee is that the existence of knowledge gaps does not diminish mentor abilities. These gaps are a cause of mentee concern who perceive them as a lack of ability and understanding of their context, (see Mole, 2021). Customised support may not be recognised immediately by the mentee as mentors formulate suppositions (phase 3) while trying to understand the new context based on of their existing knowledge. Given the opportunity, mentors will develop contextual expertise during the mentorship experience. This study's findings assert that by engaging in self-directed learning with the intention of co-creating solutions (phase 4) to provide effective, efficient and valued advice, mentors reduce gaps in their knowledge. Mitigating any concerns about the understanding of the mentee's businesses, does require open "conversation, discussion and dialogue, where the mentor engages in a reciprocal exchange of ideas and joint construction of knowledge with the mentee" as noted by Ellis *et al.,* (2020, p. 3).

c) Institutions - Formal mentorship programmes and managers

Institutions that include and are not limited to small business academies within universities, private and public incubators and accelerator programmes and their managers are fundamental drivers of mentorship education and training. Their strategic objectives and the quality of training and development outcomes are key and will be driven by their attitudes, abilities and aspirations in building a strong and collaborative part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Attitudes

It is key for institutions to encourage open communication channels and align mentor intentions with defined programme goals and developmental needs during training. A misalignment between mentor intentions and programme goal delivery could lead to unmeaningful experiences. The entrepreneurial mentor six phases and learning opportunities identified through the mentor taxonomy of learning will provide institutions with structure and specify mentor learning as a benefit of the experience. For example, this study found that the significance of new context to mentors can influence the continuation or not of the mentoring relationship. Context that is not relevant and significant to mentors at the commencement of a relationship should not deter mentors from progressing with the relationship, as this thesis has revealed.

Mentors in this study affirm that benefits like materiality (relevance and significance) of the relationship may not be realised immediately. Often materiality is revealed after the conclusion of the relationship when a similar context arises. Entrepreneurial context learning is experiential and dynamic (see Patton and Marlow, 2011), and a shift in institutional approach could change the mentor's perceptions and experience and reduce the number of rejected relationships.

Abilities

An invitation for formal mentorship programmes and their managers is to manage mentor expectations during training. Planning for, managing and engaging mentors on their expectations, prepares them for the anticipated mentoring experiences and provides a clear roadmap for practice. More emphasis on knowledge exchange through peer-learning, engaging with research such as the findings in this study, and delivering comprehensive training involving the dimensions, drivers and impact of mentor learning will help in communicating the appeal of entrepreneurial mentoring and enhance the effectiveness of such programmes. Addressing specific topics like the mentor's response to knowledge dissonance identified in this study, and the possible perceptions of their role as neither novice nor expert, (see Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005), for example, could "unlock associated difficulties related to advice-giving" (see Arshed *et al.*, 2021, p. 307) and offer mentors the space to discuss potential and previous experiences.

Aspirations

Developing impact narratives and sharing success stories that demonstrate the positive effects of mentoring within formal programmes such as those found in this study could inspire highly qualified prospective mentors. These stories could also instil confidence in the effect of mentoring and lead to partnerships with other members of the ecosystem. Entrepreneurial mentors, through formal mentorship programmes play a significant role in supporting entities that contribute to economic growth (Roman and Rusu, 2020), employment creation (Decker *et al.*, 2014) and innovation (Apostu *et al.*, 2022). Sharing mentor contributions adds value to mentorship practice and shapes the character of entrepreneurial mentoring within the ecosystem.

d) Policy implications

The motivation to include mentorship in formal mentorship programmes as part of policy objectives in South Africa demonstrates the value of mentorship and will foster access to support for all enterprises. A deeper understanding of the extent of the value proposition offered by mentoring to entrepreneurs through dialogue with researchers, institutions, and mentor and mentee representatives would be a suggested start for policy makers. In South Africa, mentorship is currently exclusive, despite certain policies and legislation, like the National Small Enterprise Act 1996, Industrial Development Corporation Act 1940, and the Cooperatives Development Act 2005 and commitments made by the Department of small business development to increase enterprise support. Dialogue and action would lead to creating opportunities of engagement aligned with policy and enterprise support objectives.

Attitudes

Entrepreneurial mentors are perceived as not requiring development. Mentors require training and development support to become more effective. This recognition and support will increase confidence in mentors and mentoring. A shift in perception and intentional engagement by policymakers with academics, small business advisors, and other members of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to determine material developmental interventions could build a well-structured support system, attract more mentoring talent, and establish a vibrant entrepreneurial culture and environment. It is unfortunate that policymakers in South Africa do not have an inspired view of entrepreneurial mentors (see Herrington, Mike; Kew, 2017). There is a perception that mentors are already experts due to their implicit knowledge and their role in supporting entrepreneurs, as noted by Bowmaker-Falcomer and Meyer (2022).

Aspirations

Policy maker collaborations with learning institutions will support their goals and ability to measure their success. This study noted the reach and benefits of entrepreneurial mentorship. Township-based mentees supported in this research were able to connect to mentorship programmes through various formal institutions that are otherwise inaccessible. The legacy of the historical divide identified in this study, highlights the

separation between previously advantaged and disadvantaged segments of the population in South Africa. This has positively influenced some mentors to support mentees from various backgrounds in developing their ventures. Currently mentor motivation is their personal empathy towards the disadvantaged. Collaboration could support policy goals like the 2021 documented primary policy output indicating that 100 enterprise incubators would provide full backing to selected small businesses through "high-touch mentoring" focused on their rapid growth with the support of existing government and higher learning institution infrastructure (DSBD, 2021, p. 10). Policy makers are also determined to evaluate and measure mentorship support to determine its impact on entrepreneurship (Bowmaker-Falconer and Herrington, 2020a). Focus on mentorship in existing or new programmes within learning institutions could also support research and data collection through mentors, explore enterprise activity, and create a knowledge-based economy.

Abilities

Mentors who participated in this study mention the positive impact of their support to mentees and their enterprises. Prioritising and facilitating knowledge transfer like entrepreneurial mentorship and training in the six phases in remote rural areas will assist in achieving policy maker objectives. The view that entrepreneurial activity drives economic growth in all geographic areas in South Africa should encourage policy makers to develop and connect as many entrepreneurs to mentors as possible. The notion that policymakers in developing countries should focus on enterprises already rooted in entrepreneurial acumen, specifically formal SMEs (Ligthelm, 2010) goes against policy objectives in South Africa. The informal enterprise sector could grow and be successful with the support of community-based mentors. Bowmaker-Falcomer and Meyer (2022) assert that rural and township entrepreneurs are considered as material stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in South Africa. Training and developing locals as mentors in rural areas and creating access to mentorship through universities in the proximity of the rural areas would positively impact policy goals.

9.4 Limitations

This study is not without limitations. From a methodological perspective, interpretivist approaches are valuable to research and portray the experience of individuals. However, the claim of normality remains debatable due to its subjective nature (see Sholl, 2015). The subjective nature of this study presents an opportunity for me to reflect on my ability to remain distant from the phenomenon I studied and see beyond the contextual and philosophical constraints. Self-reported and cross-sectional data has its restrictions. Interviews capture recollections of past events at a specific time. To completely capture reflexivity in action would require a longitudinal study which examines developments as they occur instead of solicited recollections. The progression of insight attained through various stages before substantial insight can be attained contributes to theory building; also, one cannot ignore the nature of process theories and their unfolding over time (see Jurison, 1996; Saunders, 2009; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Concerns about generalisability in qualitative research relate to the limited number of participants or cases used in the study. The challenge for qualitative researchers is demonstrating that their findings demonstrate a broader significance to existing theory (see Saunders *et al.,* 2019). Transferability, the form argued in this study, is a type of generalisability that a qualitative researcher may prefer to pursue. Sometimes it is referred to as inferential transferability. The researcher considers implementing a concept from one discipline to another (see Smith, 2018). It is hoped that the findings of this study will be transferable and will encourage studies in other mentorship relationships in varied disciplines involving a dyad.

While this study involved experienced mentors with varied demographic indicators, it is possible to explore the experiences of mentors who have other demographic delineations. The conceptual framework developed could extend to other dimensions. For example, mentors with experience outside the boundaries of this study, gender, race, ethnicity, age etc. Distinctive focus on contextual issues like socio-cultural dimensions affecting the phenomenon could reveal a fascinating influence on mentor experience and informal learning outcomes. Although "most research problems are

borderless", the geographical constraint poses a limitation. Whilst perspectives from various research cultures are beneficial, language and cultural barriers and accessibility may present obstacles (Abbasi and Jaafari, 2013, p. 683).

9.5 Conclusion

This thesis has shown how bridging contextual knowledge gaps is a catalyst for various forms of informal entrepreneurial mentor learning in a new mentorship relationship. Chapter 1 introduced the focus of the study and outlined the identified research gap. Chapter 2 integrated and assessed existing literature and theories on entrepreneurial mentorship, informal learning, and entrepreneurial context. Chapter 3, the context chapter offered an overview of the situational factors in South Africa where the data collection was conducted. Chapter 4 consisted of the methodological approach and justifications of the approach chosen for this study. It presented the research design, methods, and protocols. It led the researcher to engage with 26 participants who openly shared their experiences. The analyses and findings in chapters 5, 6 and 7 led to the Discussion chapter 8. The findings were integrated with relevant theories and literature to develop novel insights. They reflected the differences and similarities with existing literature and how current knowledge is extended.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis and highlights the key contribution to knowledge, the six entrepreneurial mentor phases. Other contributions include a taxonomy of entrepreneurial mentor learning, the relation between affect and a proficiency self-assessment completed by mentors; and the two recursive assessments identified in the six phases, linked by perceived dissonance. The implications of the findings in this study offer key stakeholders practice structure, training, guidance, and novel insight into entrepreneurial mentor experience. They reinforce a significant form of support and reciprocal exchange of ideas and joint construction of knowledge that occurs in entrepreneurial mentorship. Entrepreneurial mentorship support benefits entrepreneurs, who are regarded as instrumental in the development of innovation, job creation and contribute to the enhancement of economies.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Mentor interview guide

<u>Section 1</u>

1. How long have you been a mentor?
2. What made you become a mentor?
3. What qualifies you to be a mentor?
4. How long have you been part of this mentoring programme?
5. How long is your commitment to the programme?
6. What business experience do you have?

<u>Section 2</u>

How is the mentoring experienced by mentors?

7. How do you mentor?
8. How has the mentoring process experience been for you?
9. What in your opinion is an effective mentoring experience?

When measuring mentor functions from the perspective of the mentee, we view only one side of the coin, and this limitation can certainly be overcome by measuring the mentor's self-reported function (St. Jean et al 2017).

10. What kind of support/advice do your mentees ask for?
11. What kind of support/advice do you give your mentee?

For example, a more comprehensive case study (Stake, 1995 cited in Lamm et al 2017) or ethnographic (Fetterman, 2010 cited in Lamm et al 2017) qualitative approach may yield more rich descriptions of experiences and outcomes associated with the mentoring process (Lamm 2017).

12. What sort of SME should be mentored?

We cannot confirm without a doubt that low/high Learning Goal Orientation mentees have different motivation for entering mentoring relationships (St. Jean et al 2017).

13. What have you learned from your mentee?

In mentoring, all transitions lead to mutual learning: the mentee and mentor learn from each other (Wallace 2007, p.15)

14. What else are you committed to whilst you are mentoring? Both within and outside of the programme.

15. What, if any have been the trade-offs of your mentoring relationships?

Effective commitment is positively correlated with self-efficacy. Mentors who are confident in their skill will be more affectively committed to their role (Lejonberg and Christophersen 2015)

16. How have your mentoring experiences impacted you?

17. What do you gain from being a mentor?

It would be crucial to understand the specific conditions under which mentoring is a rewarding experience (Kennet and Lamas 2015).

18. What do you perceive to be an effective mentor?

19. What would you do differently to what you are currently doing? And Why?

More knowledge about the antecedents of mentors' self-efficacy is needed (St. Jean et al 2017).

APPENDIX II: Mentee Interview guide

<u>Section 1</u>

1. Could you tell me a bit about yourself, how you got involved in the mentoring programme?
2. What initially made you interested in running a business?
3. What did you want to achieve when you started your business?

<u>Section 2</u>

How is mentoring experienced by mentees?

4. To your knowledge, how were you paired with your mentor?

Little attention is being paid to the matching process of mentors and mentees in terms of perceived similarities and the training of mentors that could be offered (St. Jean et al 2017)

5. What were your initial goals when you joined the programme?

Not every entrepreneur has the desire to improve his/her entrepreneurial self-efficacy and novice entrepreneurs may seek mentoring for other cognitive or affective reasons (St. Jean et al 2017)

6. Please elaborate on the mentoring process agreed on with your mentor.
7. How has the experience been for you?

The imposed environment is out of the control of the individual; however, they have some control over how they respond to it (Bandura 2012).

8. What support/advice do you require from your mentor?
9. What support/advice do you receive from your mentor?

An ethnographic (Fetterman, 2010 cited in Lamm et al 2017) or qualitative approach may yield more rich descriptions of experiences and outcomes associated with the mentoring process (Lamm 2017).

10. What are some of the unexpected occurrences you have faced in the mentorship relationship?

There are other elements that could challenge a successful relationship, such as location, similar learning styles and common goals and values (Law 2007, p.16).

What insights have mentees gained from mentoring?

    11. What have you learnt from your mentor?
In mentoring, all transitions lead to mutual learning: the mentee and mentor learn from each other (Wallace 2007, p.15)
There is a widely endorsed view within the literature on entrepreneurial learning that entrepreneurs are action oriented and much of their learning, therefore, is experientially based (Rae and Carswell, 2000 cited in Cope 2003).

    12. How has mentoring influenced your interaction with your business environment?

Mentoring is a powerful means of informal learning with the benefit that it allows the mentee to produce knowledge and function productively in a complex environment (Gary and Alfred 2001).

    13. In general, what is it that you are more aware of now that you are being mentored
Mentoring is capable of the dual role of directing and supporting organisational strategies, contributing to continual development and renewal (Gavey and Alred, 2001).

Research has shown that a benefit of mentoring is that it can […] advance skill. It has the ability to assist people to "tolerate the increasing complexity of their lives" (Gavey and Alred, 2001),

What meanings do mentees attribute to the mentoring experience for their business ventures?

    14. What does success look like for you now?
    15. What is standing in the way of success for you?
    16. Have you communicated this with your mentor?
Once critical success factors are identified for a given definition of success for an SME, the performance measurement, feedback on that performance and improved techniques can be applied which are aligned with the company's strategy to make the company more successful (McAdam 2000; Hudson, Smith and Smith 2007 cited in Simpson et al 2011)

17. What business decisions have you implemented that you can attribute to the support from your mentor?

An agent applies deliberate influence over their performance and the consequences of their actions (Bandura 2012). Two overarching variables were used (organisational performance and market performance) to measure perceived firm performance as a result of earlier studies conducted by (Delaney and Huselid 1996; Harel and Tzafrir 1999; Singh 2004).

18. In general, what was your perception of your business before mentoring?
Participants in the study reported that their mentorship experiences produced positive results in their performance of managing their companies (Laukhuf and Malone 2015).

19. How is your business perception at this stage of mentoring?
20. What do you ascribe that to?
Performance is not just the outcome of self-efficacy. Performance is a determinant of self-efficacy (McGee and Peterson 2019)

APPENDIX III

Participation information sheet

Name of department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

Title of the study: Entrepreneurial mentoring

Introduction

My name is Dudu Rance, I am a South African fulltime PHD researcher studying at Strathclyde University Business School in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom.

What is the purpose of this research?

The topic is concerned with discovering the impact of **mentoring** on small or medium-sized business (SMEs) and their mentors. Dudu would like to capture the experiences of both mentors and mentees (SME owners). This study will focus on the entrepreneurial mentoring process and practice. Dudu hopes that through the study she will add to knowledge and influence policy makers on their support of SMEs, mentors, and formal SME support programmes.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary, refusal to participate or withdrawal will have no implications on you.

What will you do in the project?

The doctoral research aims to answer the following broad questions:

1. How is the mentoring process experienced by both the mentor and the mentee?
2. How has the experience impacted the mentor and the mentee
3. What can be learnt from the mentoring experience?

Over a period of 3 months, Dudu will arrange a face-to-face or telephone interview at the convenience of both of you, lasting approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You will be able to assist in this research if you:

1. Have been involved in our mentorship programme for at least **3 months,** and
2. Are an owner of a SME, and
3. Are a mentor or mentee (SME owner)

What information will be collected?

This is also an opportunity for you to express your thoughts about the effects of the mentoring process on your business (mentee) and the mentoring experience (mentor) in a confidential space through interviews lasting 1 to 1.5 hours.

Who will have access to the information?

The information you give will remain confidential, known by Dudu and her supervisory team, and authorised data handlers within the University.

Where will the information be stored?

Information will be stored by Dudu and the University, any personal information will only be kept for as long as necessary, in line with the ethical and legal policies and guidelines on research data management at the University of Strathclyde.

Dudu intends to collect her data from September 2019. Please email Dudu at Duduzile.rance@strath.ac.uk to indicate whether you are willing and able to participate in this research and also please contact her should you have any questions about the research.

Should you have any other questions and wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed, please contact:

Dr Samuel Mwaura or Dr Sreevas Sahasranamam

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APPENDIX IV

Interview Consent Form

Name of department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship
Title of the study: Entrepreneurial mentoring

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e., how it will be stored and for how long).

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

- I understand that I can request the withdrawal from the study of some personal information and that whenever possible researchers will comply with my request. This includes the following personal data:

  - video recordings of physical tests that identify me

  - audio recordings of interviews that identify me

  - my personal information from transcripts

- I understand that I, the interviewee, and the organisation will remain anonymous, unless I agree otherwise. This includes naming the organisation and role of the interviewee in the organisation. Please select how you prefer to be identified in this research and circle your best option:

  a. Be identified with my full personal name, name of the organisation I represent and my role within this organisation.

  b. Remain anonymous at personal level (not be identified with my full personal name and neither my role within the organisation) but identify the name of my organisation.

  c. Remain anonymous at all levels (my personal identity, organisation's name, and my role).

- I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and whether it is my preferred choice, no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

- I understand that any access to sensible information on my organisation will be treated as strictly confidential.

- I consent to being a participant in the project.

- I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project (please indicate your choice by including a circle on the options 'Yes or No').

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date: